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ABSTRACT

Divided into three parts, this report examines the educational system in the Netherlands in a study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Part 1, the Examiners' Report, describes and discusses the Dutch education system, raises issues, and identifies policy options in seven chapters: (1) introduction; (2) the Dutch context; (3) policy strategy and policy goals; (4) issues in primary and secondary education; (5) higher and adult education; (6) equity issues; and (7) critical perspectives and questions. An 18-item bibliography and comparative statistics also are included. Part 2 of the report provides a summary record of the review meeting that took place during the proceedings of the Education Committee of the OECD when the Dutch delegation replied to detailed questions from the Examiners and Committee members. Part 3 summarizes the authoritative background report prepared by the national Ministry of Education and Science in advance of the Examiners' visit to the Netherlands. (DB)

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FOREWORD

This third report on the Netherlands is one of the long-established series of *Reviews of National Policies for Education*. The first was published in 1970 and was followed in 1976 by a report entitled: *Netherlands – Contours of a Future Education System*.

This volume is divided into three parts. Parts One, the Examiners' Report, describes and discusses the Dutch education system, raises issues and identifies policy options. Part Two provides a summary record of the review meeting that took place during the proceedings of the Education Committee when the Dutch Delegation replied to detailed questions from the examiners and Committee members. Part Three summarises the authoritative Background Report prepared by the national Ministry of Education and Science in advance of the examiners' visit to the Netherlands.

The rapporteur was Ms Karen Seashore Louis, United States, and the examiners were Mr Lennart Bodström, Norway, and Mr Ulrich Teichler, Germany.

This volume is published on the responsibility of the OECD Secretary-General.

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Part One

THE EXAMINERS' REPORT

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Terms of reference and the Dutch invitation

Among the OECD countries, the Netherlands stands out for its historical commitment to universal education. This characteristic has been somewhat strained in the past decade, as economic conditions and national deficits led to a government policy of significant reconsideration of education budgets, and concomitant reorganisation within the system at all levels. As is often the case, the need to curb growth in a social sector requires both a sharpening of priorities, and the need for painful adjustments within the system.

The many changes over a relatively short period of time led the Dutch government to request that OECD make a broad assessment of the education system and policy developments across all levels of formal education, from kindergarten through post-baccalaureate study, including non-school based opportunities for study among adults. At the time of the request to OECD, the government could not have predicted that a cabinet crisis would result in a general election only a few weeks before the scheduled visit of the external examiners. Nevertheless, the timeliness of this review, which will be published after a change of government, makes the significance of our effort all the more apparent.

The task posed for the OECD examiners was thus a challenging one: we had two weeks in which to grasp the essential features of the Dutch education system, to understand its historic and emerging place in Dutch society, and to formulate some conclusions and questions to help guide the development of policy for the ministry and government. We are humbled by the scope of the task, but are also grateful for the enormous support that was given to us by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen*, MOW) both before and during our visit.

The programme of the OECD visits and work

Prior to our visit we were provided with a one-day briefing at the Ministry of Education and Science in June 1989, and a Background Report, *Richness of the Uncompleted: Challenges Facing Dutch Education*. This volume, produced by an able committee of ministerial employees and experts from the education system, was extraordinarily complete. In addition, it manifested what we came to realise is a strength of the Dutch culture: the ability to analyse and criticise their own situation with considerable objectivity. The process of gaining understanding of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the education system was eased by this comprehensive document.

In fact, it is so exhaustive that we have been unable to locate an important issue or topic that is not treated in some fashion in the report. Thus, our task has been less to organise new material for this report than to provide our own interpretation and emphasis based on the additional interviews and materials that we have read.

During our two-week visit in September-October 1989, our Dutch hosts provided us with a very full schedule of meetings and interviews, but also with substantial logistical and interpretive support. Because the Netherlands is a small country, our schedule could be accommodated with very little travel on our part. One or two knowledgeable Ministry employees accompanied us at all times, both briefing us on the issues prior to our meetings, and helping to clear up points of factual confusion afterwards. While any errors of interpretation are our own, there would have been many more if we had not been assisted by such an able and apparently tireless group, consisting of Dr. Leon Henkens (coordinator), Mrs. Marieke Bolle, Dr. Walter Kickert, Mr. P.G. Kroeger, Dr. Ineke van Nes-Sas and Dr. Ferry de Rijcke.

We also appreciate the courtesy and attention of Dr. W.J. Deetman, Minister of Education and Science at the time the request for an OECD review was made, who retained an interest in our work despite the pressing obligations of his new role as President of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, and provided us with a great deal of insight during our initial briefing and debriefing meetings. Dr. B. de Haan, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Science, was also unfailingly helpful in co-ordinating our visit. The current Minister, Dr. Ir. J.J.M. Ritzen, and State Secretary, Dr. J. Wallage, provided us with key insights on the policies and perspectives of the new government during a briefing in January 1990.

In addition, every effort was made to ensure that we came into contact with educators and policy-makers of every possible persuasion: we met with persistent and harsh critics of recent government policy developments as well as with optimistic and ardent supporters. But, from every quarter we were impressed with the apparent desire of the Dutch to present their issues and concerns very openly — we emerged, in fact, with the conviction that the Dutch are perhaps too critical of their own education system which has, by most measures of short- and long-term productivity, been largely successful.

Other OECD reports

Our task was also facilitated by the availability of several previous OECD education reviews — one in 1970 and another in 1976 — and more recent reports: *OECD Economic Surveys: the Netherlands* (1989), "Teachers in the Netherlands" (1987) and *Reviews of National Science and Technology Policy – Netherlands* (1987). Findings of the latter three reports will be incorporated into the body of this report. A brief outline of some of the evolving issues implied by the earlier education reviews provides, however, a useful transition to our discussion of current topics.

Nearly twenty years ago, the major issues facing the Dutch education system were not entirely different from those of today. The Dutch are currently fond of referring to their system as composed of "relatively autonomous" institutions, a phrase coined in the 1970s to reflect the general tension between accountability and freedom of choice that permeate the debates over education in the Netherlands. As the OECD educational review of 1970 suggests, the roots of this view are deeply embedded.

The report was critical of key social inefficiencies in the Dutch education system that resulted, in the examiners' view, from low levels of central regulation; poor articulation between the elementary and secondary systems; a lack of central planning mechanisms; and a great deal of individual choice and freedom for higher education students, which limited the education sys-

tem's ability to adapt to changing economic requirements. The overwhelming impression left by this review is that the Dutch education system was, at that time, largely run by individual schools and universities.

Although there is more educational planning, less complete freedom for higher education and a "bridging year" transition between primary and secondary school for the population of 13 year-olds, these issues have not been resolved. They are prominently reflected as components of today's policy debates, although they are framed somewhat differently in recent reports such as Ministry paper, "Schools toward 2000", and the recent comments on this report by the Hirsch Ballin Committee ("Recommendations for Development of Educational Legislation in the Nineties"), and in written comments about government policy from the Association of National Universities (VSNU).

The 1976 report is an external review of a major policy discussion document *(Contours of a Future Education System)* presented by the incumbent Minister of Education, Dr. J.A. van Kemenade, to address these and other issues. At this time, the central problem was framed in terms of the need to redesign the structure of the education system to provide more flexible educational experiences, and to move towards a comprehensive middle school at the junior secondary system, rather than the system of separate schools for university-preparatory, general and vocational students. The external review was generally positive, but the process of reaching social consensus on the middle school proved difficult. Although several social experiments were initiated in response to this document, in the interim, a new government and severe financial problems distracted attention from the "Contours" proposals. Like the 1970 report, however, the issues raised in the 1976 OECD report have not gone away: we found them visibly embedded in a recent discussion memorandum, "The active school", issued by one of the major unions, as well as in the oral and written remarks of several other major educational associations.

Thus, the previous reports both identified persistent issues that characterise Dutch education: the dilemma of finding the right balance between centralisation and decentralisation; that between the goal of promoting equity versus selection by merit; and the goal of freedom of choice versus social and economic demands. These dilemmas are reflected throughout the *Richness of the Uncompleted* volume, and will also appear at various points in our review.

Some reflections on the Dutch culture and our task

One of the significant rewards of participating in a review team is the opportunity to penetrate another society during a rather brief period of time. By spending two weeks talking to people about their education system, it is possible to find many cultural assumptions that increase an outsider's understanding of the education system. We offer here a few of our observations.

One feature of Dutch social behaviour that strikes almost every visitor is the "open curtain" phenomenon. In no other country where people live so close together is it customary to build houses with large front windows that are left uncovered in the evenings, so that the passer-by can observe the family in its normal routines. After several discussions, we felt that this is a symbolic reflection of the tendency to open many aspects of social structure and behaviour to others. Although we were not inside, we were given every opportunity to see what goes on in the front room. As with houses, we know that there are also rooms at the back, and that if life appears well ordered, there may still be some parts out of view that are less tidy and attractive. Nevertheless, we found it much easier than we had initially anticipated to gain a reasonably good insight into the main issues that affect current educational policy and practice from the primary grades through post-graduate training.

A second cultural feature that we have already referred to also helped in this regard: the tendency to be intensely self-critical. Our informants dissected each perceived educational failing or problem in detail. On the other hand, we were equally impressed with the general reluctance to voice opinions about solutions in the same detail — or sometimes even at all. The American in our group was particularly struck with this aspect of the Dutch character, since in her country the opposite would be true: After a relatively minimal analysis of problems, many detailed possible solutions would be worked out and presented.

Third, the often observed tolerance of the Dutch for social differences has an unexpected twist that may affect the way in which educational policy and action works in the Netherlands. We found what we believed were a surprising number of contradictions within existing and proposed policies which did not seem be regarded as flaws or problems. To give one example, the educational policies in the 1980s seem to have been strongly retrenchment-driven, and current language reflects a concern with "efficiency"; on the other hand, it is also apparent that the Dutch are willing to accept, in principle, an education system that is in many ways extremely costly, but maximises individual choice and academic freedom. The relatively limited discussion about this apparent tension, except in political party platforms, was surprising to us. Another contradiction is between the apparent consensus that a main problem with the education system is the need for a raising of standards. Yet, at the same time there are very diverse views about the meaning of "quality education", ranging from an emphasis on the need to maintain or increase student achievement in the general tracks of upper secondary school to the need to improve labour market articulation in lower and middle-level vocational education. Whereas the rhetoric suggests a common direction of innovation, in practice very diverse improvements are aimed for. To summarise, in educational policy it is all right to "agree to disagree", while on the surface behaving as if consensus has been achieved.

These emerging small insights into Dutch culture made our job easier, as they helped to explain why some aspects of the system operate as they do. On the other hand, they also made it harder, because the more we knew about the culture, the more apparent our own blinders became. We hasten to add that our fascination with our "outsider's insights" into another country's *zeitgeist* did not distract us from our primary purpose, and will be injected into the discussion of this report only when we believe that it is necessary in order to explain our observations.

Purpose and organisation of this report

In this report we adopt the traditional role of OECD examiners. Our report identifies issues that must be addressed if the richly complex character of Dutch education is to remain compatible with deeply-held cultural values, but evolve in response to challenges facing all OECD Member countries. Our task is to critique and raise questions for the government, but not to provide answers or to develop detailed policy recommendations of our own. We have specifically avoided questions or issues that might reflect our own preferences, but which we perceive to be unambiguously unacceptable in the Dutch context.

Every effort has been made to consider the issues identified in the last chapter of *The Richness of the Uncompleted*, but we have chosen to organise our report by institutional sectors. Thus, after first reviewing the context of Dutch education in Chapter 2, we examine the role of the government and the Ministry (Chapter 3), the primary and secondary education system (Chapter 4), the tertiary system (Chapter 5) and a number of cross-cutting topics related to educational equity (Chapter 6). In Chapter 7 we summarise our observations by pointing to areas recommended for government action, posing related questions.

Chapter 2

THE DUTCH CONTEXT

The Background Report, *Richness of the Uncompleted* (see the Summary, Part Three of this volume), depicts a wide variety of factors that historically and currently influence Dutch education. In this chapter we will cover only a few that we believe to be central to our analysis and recommendations.

Education in the Netherlands in historical context

A passion for education has characterised the Netherlands for centuries. Education has always been valued in its own right but this sentiment has been additionally reinforced by practical considerations. The Dutch economy, traditionally dependent on international trading, demands a well-schooled population.

The reputation of Dutch education was well established during the earliest period of the development of the "modern" university in the 16th century, and adolescents all over the world still learn about scientific developments that occurred at the University of Leiden. This scholarly pre-eminence persists, as Dutch scholars are, relative to the number of professors, among those most often cited in the *International Science Citation Index*.

The Netherlands was one of the first countries to institute commercial education courses for both boys and girls, and common primary schools for all children were considered a responsibility of the State by the early part of the 19th century. By the middle of that century, a well developed system of publicly supported gymnasia for further academic study had emerged. In addition to their democratic character, Dutch schools were considered the best in Europe during this period, and were noted by foreigners as having two unusual qualities, both of which continue to be valued: its governance was decentralised and its pedagogy was child-centered.

This tradition is richly continued today. Education begins earlier in the Netherlands than in many countries: children are eligible to go to school on the date of their 4th birthday, although they are not obligated to do so until their 5th, and the proportion of its students who go on to tertiary education is among the highest in OECD countries — a trend facilitated by policies of expansion of higher education initiated in the 1970s — lagging only behind the United States and Canada. Over 6.5 per cent of its Gross National Product is devoted to educational expenses, second only to Sweden. In terms of the number of students 15 and older attending secondary school, it belongs to the majority of OECD countries in which approximately three-quarters of students are enrolled in full-time courses of study.

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The governance of schooling: recent history and the Constitution

In addition to its deserved reputation for quality, the Dutch education system has a number of unique features. One that a visitor may notice (if he reads a little Dutch) is that at certain times of the year, local newspapers are full of advertisements for schools: "Come and visit our primary school, and see what good education is like"; "Parent and student open house, to be held on...". Are schools really competing with each other for pupils? This behaviour can be traced to a critical feature of Dutch society, in which the educational system merely reflects a broader principle around which social life is structured.

Although to an outsider the Dutch population appears remarkably homogeneous in appearance, social class and behaviour, it is characterised on the inside by deep divisions which, in the spirit of the traditional Dutch respect for differences, have become embedded into daily life without causing obvious conflict or disrupting the operation of the social milieu. The underlying belief is that each individual should have the right to associate primarily with others who hold the same beliefs and values, as long as this social segregation does not yield to discrimination. For historical reasons, the country has been firmly divided into religious groups for several centuries. Throughout most of history, the Dutch have assumed a posture of (at least unofficial) tolerance towards religious minorities, and for more than a century the social life of the Netherlands has been dominated by *verzuiling*, or pillarisation, in which Catholics, Protestants and "neutral" organisations exist in every sphere, from unions to libraries to hobby clubs.

The role of pillarisation in predetermining the friends, social activities and political affiliations of the Dutch citizen is apparently diminishing, but its importance in the educational sector continues to be profound because it is embedded in the Dutch Constitution: Article 23 states that "all persons shall be free to provide education", and that "Private primary schools that satisfy the conditions laid down by Act of Parliament shall be financed from public funds according to the same standards as public-authority schools".

This critical provision (which is also extended to apply to secondary schools) obligates the government to fund any school of a minimum size at an equal level across schools. In practice, this means that approximately 70 per cent of all schools in the Netherlands are publicly funded, but private, most of them being Catholic or Protestant, with a smaller number of unaffiliated private schools. The private schools are, for the most part, not attached to a specific church congregation, but are governed by a foundation and a board of directors composed largely of parents and relevant community members. Parents are free to choose whatever school they wish, based on their own assessments of quality, convenience, and consistency with their values. Although some research suggests that the contribution of denominational pillar to school choice is diminishing, other recent investigations conclude that, at least in some parts of the country, it is still a very prominent factor.

The current interpretation of Article 23 supports government regulation of many aspects of schooling that reflect quality standards: teacher qualifications, basic curricula, use of finances, and so on. However, it is not to interfere with the right of the "competent authorities" (the municipality in the case of public schools, and the school's local board in the private sector) to determine how teaching shall be done, what textbooks are to be used, or the precise content of the curriculum. Although pillarisation is, according to many observers, less powerful in regulating all aspects of a person's life than it was twenty or thirty years ago, the principle of "freedom of education" remains a central feature of the political compromise among social groups, fiercely protected by the Christian Democrats and orthodox religious parties, and also valued by Liberal and Socialists in party platforms and privately.

The tradition of government: rule by consensus and review

Not surprisingly, the government has sought ways of playing a constructive role in policy development despite its weak constitutional base. The basic strategy has been to develop extensive advisory networks, both inside and outside the government, which help to create a strong enough national consensus for change to permit passage of new laws and regulations governing education.

One interesting characteristic of the Dutch system is that it combines two different attitudes towards the legitimacy of government that are more often found separately. In countries where the perceived legitimacy of the central government is high (for example in France), formal advisory bodies are generally incorporated within the civil service or ancillary government bodies. In countries where the legitimacy of the central government is relatively low (the United States), most advisory bodies are private "lobbying" groups, located outside the government, and consulted on a more informal basis. The Dutch system, on the other hand, has elements of both, and a very large number of both outside and inside advisors.

Probably the most important structural feature that permits education to be partly driven from the center, while maintaining its decentralised character, are the "umbrella organisations". These are formal co-operative institutions of educational groups, from school board associations to teacher unions, within each pillar (e.g., there is a Catholic umbrella organisation, a Protestant umbrella organisation, etc.). These national institutions constitute policy-making partners, meeting jointly with the Minister of Education on a regular basis.

In addition, there are many other advisory groups that have a formal role to play in developing educational policy. The Social and Economic Council, composed of representatives of industry and labour, and independent Crown appointees, provide an outside perspective on labour market and productivity issues. The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, a government agency, is responsible for issuing bi-annual reports on "the state of the nation" in various social sectors, and education is also featured in its special reports. The Advisory Council on Government Policy, staffed by appointees, provides extensive commentaries, both self-initiated and responding to government requests, on policy choices; while the Educational Advisory Council reviews all proposed policies in terms of their consistency with constitutional and legal structures, and their educational worth. Numerous special-purpose advisory groups exist.

The requirement that the government consult with all of these bodies means that the wheels of policy-making grind somewhat slowly in the Netherlands. Unlike many countries, "majority rule" in Parliament is not always sufficient to make changes in the education system, nor is party unity always easy to achieve on educational issues. On the other hand, once an educational policy passes through Parliament, it is virtually assured of broad acceptance, since there is strong social consensus supporting it.

The recent economic context

Like many European countries, the early 1980s were a period of economic problems in the Netherlands. High levels of unemployment which, coupled with major increases in social sector spending and slow economic growth, resulted in large national budget deficits. In 1982, after a prolonged cabinet crisis, a new Christian Democrat-Liberal coalition was formed and introduced strong austerity measures.

The remainder of the 1980s has been a period where public expenditures, as a percentage of GNP, have dropped virtually continuously, inflation has been reduced, employment increased

(although unemployment remains high) and economic growth restored. Economic futures are difficult to predict, due to the unknown impacts of the planned market unification of the European Community after 1992 and political developments in Eastern Europe. However, the Netherlands is well positioned to take advantage of more open international trade. In general, the opportunities for continued economic growth appear sound.

The education system, with its relatively high expenditures, was one of the sectors that was initially targeted for budget cuts in the early 1980s. The complicated statistical material available suggests that educational expenditures did not grow in real terms, and undoubtedly became a slightly smaller proportion of the GNP. The major cuts implemented seem to have led to a savings of about 8 per cent, but in fact, the real cuts have been less than were initially expected due to an increase in the numbers of students in some high expense educational sectors (special education and higher education), and innovations requiring special funds.

On the one hand, according to the *OECD Economic Review* (1989), the economy of the country is in a generally sound condition, but "more coherence is needed within labour market programmes and in the education system in general..." (p. 9) in order to deal with the continuing problems of labour market inflexibility and structural unemployment. Increasing rates of unemployment among those who have graduated with qualifications from secondary schools and universities (including recent graduates), and the shortages of qualified applicants for jobs in various industrial sectors, has led to further questions about the articulation of the education system with the economic system. On the other hand, it is also acknowledged that, with its relatively high levels of international performance, and its emphasis on mastering several non-Dutch languages, the education system contributes to the positive economic picture (although industry representatives find some fault with the quality of technical training).

Some additional recent trends affecting education

During our discussions, we noted a few policy trends that have implications that are, in our view, broader than is apparent in the Background Report.

First, in 1985, the merger of kindergarten and primary schools was required. In addition, as part of the emphasis on the budget reductions, and in response to declining enrolments, the government has encouraged the merger of all small primary and secondary schools, and higher vocational institutions, by raising the minimum size eligible for government funding. Thus, the number of educational institutions in the Netherlands declined quite dramatically during the 1980s. This trend persists, particularly at the secondary level, and is reinforced by the new government coalition agreement which again raises minimum size requirements.

At the secondary level, mergers have resulted in some schools that provide "comprehensive education", in the sense that all major streams, from pre-university through vocational, are offered in the same institution. Other merger patterns have resulted in marriages between one or two types of institutions, but mergers have rarely occurred across pillars. In contrast, cross-pillar mergers of smaller higher vocational institutes have led to the informal acknowledgement that religious "freedom of choice" is, for all intents and purposes, more or less irrelevant at the tertiary level. (The primary teacher training institutes, to be discussed in more detail later, were an exception.) Although there are several private universities and vocational institutes, most students simply attend the appropriate institution nearest to them; this also seems to be true for the upper secondary vocational programmes, but public support for maintaining religiously affiliated schools persists.

Second, the language describing the primary goals of education has been changing in response to the changing economic and political environment. In the 1970s, as reflected in the *Contours of a future education system*, the major concern appeared to be with the promotion of individual development and life chances. The Background Report indicates a shift towards a concern over "quality" and the articulation between education, and social and economic demands. A new policy language, which often adopts the vocabulary of the private sector ("quality control"), is maintained in the current coalition agreement, where emphasis is placed on improving the "management culture" of the education system, in addition to economy-education linkages.

The topic of the changing language of discourse was raised in many of our discussions: all agreed that the balance between different goals was currently in question. Those who argued in favour of the need for a shift tended to be very positive about Chapter 4 of the Background Report; those who disagreed found the report superior in other ways, but argued that the change in goals represented an unjustified imbalance. (See, for example, "Ijken door herijken", a report from the Protestant umbrella organisation, NPC.)

Third, the Background Report raises a critical governance question — who should manage education? — that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. The issue, as elaborated by the Ministry in the "Schools toward 2000" white paper, is framed largely in terms of the need to increase control over education on the part of local schools and their "responsible authorities" while decreasing that exercised by the Ministry. However, in practice the issue of control is more complex. Numerous local educators speculated that a diminution of government control would simply create a vacuum for regional authorities, or other groups, to step in: the Ministry was, paradoxically, viewed as a protection against a possible tyranny of more regional or local control. Discussions about the establishment of regional labour markets councils heightened the concerns that the Netherlands might be about to experience a radical shift which, as in the United States, could leave schools and vocational higher education institutions with less autonomy.

Summary

The above issues represent a very incomplete list of the controversies that were presented to us during the two-week visit. We make no claims for their enduring presence in the policy arena, indicating only that they struck us as posing unresolved and potentially problematic issues for national policy in addition to historical tensions outlined in Chapter 1. Other more specific issues will be raised as we discuss more specific policies affecting different educational sectors.

Chapter 3

POLICY STRATEGY AND POLICY GOALS

Centralised or decentralised?

One of many apparent contradictions facing an outside visitor to the Netherlands centres on the relations between central government and national umbrella steering groups, and the individual and the school. On the one hand, the Dutch are used to describing their education system as composed of "relatively autonomous schools", a term first brought into extensive use as a consequence of policy discussions within the umbrella organisations in the 1970s. People rather proudly point to the limited role that government can play in the functioning and content of education at the school level. Even such a major issue as the structure of secondary education is being decided at the local level, through the decisions of individual school boards to support mergers between schools of different types. On the other hand, there have been so many new regulations governing school and individual choices issued during the past decade that individuals in all educational sectors complain that they feel unduly hampered by central government management.

From a theoretical point of view, we can locate two major domains of control in educational institutions: control over procedures (allocation of money, hiring and deployment of personnel, detailed curricula or textbook selections, etc.) or control over outputs (setting attainment standards, assessment of schools and individual students through achievement tests, reviewing research productivity at universities) (Figure 1). Many centralised countries (France, Italy, Spain) have national level control over both. Other relatively decentralised countries (Denmark) have neither to any great degree. Those who fall in between exhibit different patterns. In England, for example, a centralised role was, until recently, limited to output control through the examination system (11+, A levels and O levels), and left the details of curriculum and staffing decisions up to the Local Education Authority, and often to the school. Some of the Canadian provincial governments, such as Ontario, exercise substantial control over school procedures, but do not control output.

The Dutch education system belongs to those systems that are neither primarily centralised nor decentralised, but which operate in a state of negotiated balance between national control and local control over schools. However, the system, it is argued, is in planned transition from a system of high procedural but low output control, to one in which there is low procedural but higher output control, a policy which is reinforced in the new government coalition agreement.

The theme of this policy shift has been described by the Ministry as an effort to give more autonomy to educational institutions. This is, however, somewhat misleading since there is really a proposed trade-off between control and autonomy in different spheres. In our view, the use

Figure 1. **Alternative steering models for education**

	Control over "outputs"	
	High	Low
Control over procedures		
High	(France)	Netherlands (past)
Low	Netherlands (future)	(Denmark)

of the term autonomy has lead to significant problems in understanding of the government's intent among many practitioners. Although the planned shift is not yet implemented in primary and secondary schools, and is only partly implemented in higher education, there are concerns in all sectors (other than higher vocational education) that it may result in major increases in output or quality control, with only minor changes in institutions' ability to direct their own internal procedural affairs.

Part of the concern must be grounded in an understanding of the history of the regulation of education in the Netherlands. During most of this century, the national government's role has been limited to the regulation of the general structure of the education system, financial procedures, and personnel licensing procedures in primary and secondary schools. Despite agreement on constitutional limitations, however, the number of detailed regulations on the basis of these procedural functions distributed by the Ministry during a single year could fill a large book. One overworked primary school principal told us that she had given up reading them because it was impossible to figure out how to put them all into practice; another secondary school observer commented that the government regulations affecting the curriculum have increased dramatically in the recent past. In contrast, output control at the national level has, on the other hand, been limited by tradition to the final examination at the end of secondary school, and half of that examination is set by the individual school.

The motivations for this major shift in steering policy appear to be several: first, major primary/secondary educational innovation policies of the 1970s and early 1980s focused on changing the structure of the school to improve effectiveness and efficiency, but early evaluations suggested disappointing results. For example, the "Middle Schools" project never spread beyond a small number of early experiments; the MAVO (lower secondary general education) project attempted to make substantial changes in the curriculum and pedagogy in this stream, but was initially judged to be ineffective in diffusing changes beyond the small number of intensively assisted schools; and the New Primary School Law, which mandated merger between nursery schools for 4-5 year-olds and the regular primary school, is commonly viewed as a structural success but a disappointment in terms of reforming primary education (but many feel that these arguments were premature).

Second, the inability of the government to achieve a social consensus about what to do with the junior secondary level provides a constant reminder of the frustrations of trying to create potent structural and procedural reforms in a nation which persistently opposes attempts to intrude too deeply into the heart of the school.

Third, there were innovations and social priorities that the government wished to maintain even during a period of general budget cuts — for example, the integrated primary school, a

concern about targeting funding to schools that enrolled a high proportion of children from poor and/or minority families, and maintaining a nationally uniform maximum class size in primary school. These and other priorities resulted in increasing constraints on the stable or declining school budget, so that many school leaders reported that they had no unallocated resources to meet school-defined goals and priorities. Similarly, at the university level, budgets were largely determined by national policies governing capitation reimbursements, and the allocation of research funds.

Fourth, at the primary/secondary level, enrolment declines led the national teacher unions to respond to the prospect of staff redundancies by negotiating additional regulations over decisions about who should go, and ensuring that the working conditions of teachers would be governed by national law rather than local whim. With personnel policies increasingly decided at the national level, individual schools or universities have had relatively little discretion over who would become a staff member, or even whether staff would be full- or part-time.

At the tertiary level, major shifts in structure, to be described in Chapter 5, could not take place without government interventions, which ranged from decisions to close departments, to mandated mergers in higher vocational education, to a redefinition of the positions of various faculty and research staff members.

Thus, no educational sector has felt itself immune from the regulations that accompanied simultaneous attempts to stimulate major changes and to enforce a less expensive education system. Although the incremental policy changes of the decade were often individually small, they were increasingly perceived as government "micro-management" of the educational enterprise.

"Steering at a distance"

The creeping expansion of regulations has been of some concern to the government, and over the past few years it has endeavoured to develop and promote a new steering model for all educational sectors. The policy focuses primarily on the machinery of decision-making rather than on specific goals regarding the structure, contents, and processes of education. The new steering philosophy is not intended simply to shift the responsibility for managing further budget cuts, as is sometimes perceived by those who view promises of more autonomy as just a nice word for retrenchment. However, the policy intent is to pair budget control with a change in the way in which education is guided by the government.

If previous educational policies have resulted in detailed regulation of the budget, "steering at a distance" assumes that the dominant educational values and aims would be well served if general cognitive and societal aims of education are articulated at the centre, while the means of reaching those ends, and the articulation of social and moral development goals, are largely determined at the periphery. Thus, rather than monitoring budgets and time allocations at the institutional level, the government would permit greater leeway to institutions in management, but create a stronger environment of accountability at the institutional level. In practice this means:

- a reduction of procedural control, particularly regarding bureaucratic regulations and tight constraints on freedom of action over budget and personnel decisions at the institutional level;
- a strengthening of management capacities and action at the institutional level to promote increased innovation and effectiveness;

— an extension of assessment and evaluation of the efficiency and goal achievement of educational institutions to ensure that society will benefit from more latitude.

This philosophy lies at the heart of many of the major innovation proposals emerging from the previous right-centre coalition government, and these have been tentatively reaffirmed by current left-centre agreements. The examiners support the intent of this policy, and agree that it represents a needed adjustment in the negotiated balance of control over Dutch education. Nevertheless, we also believe that such a shift will not be easy. There is obviously uncertainty about the character of the governance policy that will emerge under the new coalition, and some critical questions that can be asked for all levels and sectors. In addition, even when the government's policy becomes clearer, the period of transition is unlikely to be rapid, as it will depend on the development of new attitudes, skills and institutional arrangements. In particular, these principles will be operationalised through many pieces of proposed legislation and, as we noted above, parliamentary action on educational issues, and the development of accompanying regulation, is not typically rapid in the Netherlands.

At the primary/secondary level, for example, the basic education bill will propose attainment goals for 14 subjects for junior secondary education. (The new coalition has proposed one level, rather than two, of attainment standards). Here the government has proposed to abandon the 20- year unsuccessful search for a restructured comprehensive or integrated "middle school" and replace it by an obligation on the part of schools to ensure that students achieve a minimum proficiency. Other proposals have included the use of a "lump sum" budget, and the reallocation of other monies to the school to create discretionary resources for locally designed innovation. Underlying this shift is a belief in the capacity for management that lies unused at the local level.

To date, the efforts to change the steering policy have met with substantial criticism from different sectors. We will name only those concerns that were agreed upon by more than one individual with whom we met, or which were reinforced with data in one form or another:

— At the university level, changes in institutional management and output assessment have been initiated before relative deregulation of input was realised. This has led to a deep frustration with the burden of responding to increasing levels of government rules. Although it is often the case that a sense of relief will lag behind actual changes in regulatory procedures, deregulation is still largely a policy operating on paper rather than in practice.
— In smaller institutions, it is argued that changes in management and assessment are (and will be) overshadowed by the severity of existing financial cuts. That is, it is difficult for institutions that have no slack resources at all to develop management capacities.
— The government policy is based on a substantial structural change in institutions as a precondition to improved management capacity and educational effectiveness — e.g. mergers. However, mergers posed a substantial burden on institutions, which largely distracts them from concerns with innovation and effectiveness for a relatively long period of time.
— Expectations for autonomy have been unrealistically raised, as the government promoted its philosophy of local innovation. Some institutions are disappointed about the degree of autonomy that appears to be forthcoming.
— Early proposals about assessment procedures and/or attainment goals spurred concerns that the "cure" of increased output control activities would be worse than the "disease" of rampant input control and micro-management by government.

It should be noted that Higher Vocational Education (HBO) institutions do not seem to share these concerns.

Assessment of education

The shift to output assessment is a logical consequence of the increasing concern with quality. However, it will involve major changes, as the Dutch have traditionally exhibited a healthy skepticism about the value of standardized testing of students, as opposed to locally designed and administered methods of assessing achievement.

For example, although students are required to choose a specific type of secondary education stream at the age of twelve, the mechanism for guiding students into streams is largely based on the qualitative assessment of teachers and the school leader. There are no mandatory standardized tests of student ability and achievement, either when entering the system or at regular points thereafter. Even the scores of terminal examinations taken by secondary students to gain entrance to tertiary education depend equally on local school-designed examination results and those set and marked nationally. The lack of interest in testing programmes is attributable to the strong desire to limit the role of the government in the internal affairs of the school and universities. In addition, other forms of centralised assessment, particularly the Inspectorate, have also been weak relatively to other European countries.

This does not mean that the Dutch have been unconcerned with the quality of education, but, like the Scandinavian countries, they have preferred to assess quality very indirectly, by the performance of graduates in adult work and social roles. Until rather recently, there seems to have been a general level of satisfaction with school performance.

The need for accountability

Over the past twenty-plus years, however, there has been an increased concern about educational productivity, particularly with respect to what we might call students "at risk" of poor performance as a consequence of their social background. As noted above, this has been fed by the perceived disjuncture between education and the labour market.

Recent educational research has provided other goads: while international studies indicate that Dutch students (particularly at the secondary level) perform very well in math and science, national cross-sectional and longitudinal studies initiated in the 1980s raised some serious questions. At the end of the primary school, the national longitudinal study of primary students (PPON study) showed that approximately 21 per cent of the students read several grades below what is expected. Despite government allocations of compensatory funds to schools with a large proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, data on performance indicate that social class continues to predict both the educational track that students select, and the probability that they will drop out without real qualifications.

At the same time, observers note a marked trend towards the use of more and increasingly detailed examinations in secondary education. In fact, some educators are beginning to talk about the possibility that the examinations are driving the curriculum, as teachers gear their instruction to the topics and skills covered on exams. In addition, larger numbers of primary schools are making use of nationally developed tests, both as final examinations to help in the placement of students in appropriate lower secondary tracks, and to measure learning in other areas. About 50 per cent of the primary schools use a standardized test for their own purposes.

Finally, concerns were expressed about the relatively low levels of productivity of the university system in terms of the number of graduates, the time between entry and graduation, and the level of activity in scientific research. These issues have been directly addressed through

various structural and personnel reform measures, but the desire to continue to hold universities accountable for their productivity persists.

These and other social changes (including the increasing emphasis on formal assessment in other countries, such as the United States and Great Britain) have created a real public concern about the effectiveness of the Dutch education system. There is a new interest in "quality", an ambiguous notion that currently concentrates on measures of productivity in terms of pupil achievement, retention and attainment of qualifications, participation in higher and further education and, in higher education, of research and publications. As in the United States, the interest in quality appears to be driven by an industrial model of education where, it is asserted, efficiency is increased because of the need to respond to quantitative indicators of performance (sales, return on investment, etc.). The incremental growth of testing, for local use and for broad research assessments of "the state of the education system", is part of a search for cognate feedback indicators.

How accountability will proceed in a country where 70 per cent of the schools are private is not fully worked out. While Article 23, like other aspects of a constitution, may be open to new interpretations under changing conditions, there will clearly be the need for much discussion about the nature of any accountability system. Some aspects of this needed discussion will be briefly explored in the next section.

Who will assess? For what purpose?

The questions that remain unanswered in the documents and discussions that we have encountered are among the most critical. In particular, it is unclear what the purposes of educational assessment really are. Several assessment goals can be identified:

- *Setting minimum standards for individual performance:* to use examinations to determine whether students have acquired a minimum level of proficiency for promotion to the next level. Some argue that this is a more equitable way of determining which students should repeat classes than relying on the judgements of individual teachers or professors.
- *Selection goals:* to determine which students are performing well in order that the institutions — educational or employment — they wish to enter will have concrete measures of their knowledge and skills. This is the goal of the current terminal examinations for secondary school, but has no comparable operation elsewhere in the system.
- *Setting minimum standards for institutional performance:* to determine differences in the performance of individual institutions for the purpose of eliminating low performing institutions. This goal would usually be accompanied by either sanctions (requirements for improvement coupled with the threat of reductions in funding) and/or closure if the school/university department does not improve.
- *Fostering constructive competition:* to stimulate institutions and consumers/parents to improve by providing reliable measures of the achievement of the students compared to other schools. Consumers will choose schools whose results are higher, and schools that perform more poorly will make efforts to improve in order to retain or attract more pupils. Thus, market-like behaviour will be stimulated.
- *National assessment:* to obtain identical measures of student performance over time so that the national authorities are able to make judgements about whether the performance of students in critical subjects at various levels is improving, stationary, or decreasing. Particularly when coupled with information about student characteristics (gender,

minority status, regional location, etc.) or institutional features (size, staff characteristics, programme organisation) this provides important information for the government in designing constructive educational policies such as curriculum development programmes and compensatory educational policies for gender and racial equity.

All of these are reasonable goals. However, lessons from other countries suggest that not all can be maximised by a single assessment system, at least in a country where the legal responsibility for education is decentralised. For example, institutions rarely pay much attention to standardized data collected by higher governmental authorities, so a national testing system might not stimulate schools to pay much attention to curriculum innovation nor universities to change their research priorities. A locally designed assessment system, however, may have that impact. Similarly, a local assessment system, coupled with peer and/or inspectorate review visits, provides many notable benefits for schools and institutions of higher education, but will not permit national assessment of the type described above.

In our view, a national discussion about the aims of assessment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and who will have responsibility for carrying out assessment, are critical before additional decisions are made about accountability. This will require addressing questions such as:

- To whom will institutions be more accountable? How will this vary depending on whether the institutions are public or private?
- On what measures will they be accountable?
- Over what time-frames will accountability be determined – every year, every five years, or every decade?
- Who will be empowered to conduct assessments: the school or higher education institution, an independent agency (inspectorate, CITO) or the government itself? How broad will the assessment be?
- Will the assessment strive for quantitative indicators only, or are more qualitative assessments also important?

Currently, the proposed assessment system is more clearly defined at the level of universities than for other institutions. In the next section we will, therefore, discuss the more speculative framework for an accountability system in primary/secondary education. The specific issues related to higher education will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Alternative assessment systems: three scenarios

Three alternative assessment systems reflecting different perspectives, and different responses to the questions and assessment goals discussed above, emerged during our visit. These are obviously not the only possible systems that can be imagined, but they reflect the range of alternative views. In our view, all of these systems could be made compatible with the language of Article 23.

The first might be called a "National-Tight System." In this scenario, the Ministry and the Inspectorate would assume the dominant role in evaluating both individual schools, and the education system as a whole. In a tight-evaluation system, examinations, with some identified minimum competency score for passing, would be set for several levels at the primary school, at the end of the proposed common three years of the proposed basic education in junior secondary schools, as well as at the end of each stream of secondary school as a means for determining whether or not the student would be promoted or leave with full qualifications. In addition,

examinations could also be designed to assess high achievement, thus assisting in the process of allocating students to appropriate schools and/or streams. It would be hoped that schools would choose to extend testing to other levels, in order to identify students in need of compensatory work. The role of the Inspectorate would be twofold: to ensure that instruction in a school did not focus exclusively on the minimum skills included in tests, but also covered other cognitive and social objectives; and to conduct assessments of the functioning of other aspects of the system, such as changing social conditions in schools, curricular quality, etc.

If a "National-Tight System" is to encourage changes and improvement at the local level, several other features would need to be built in. First, standardized test scores would need to be adjusted for the nature of the student population; e.g., the socio-economic and lingual status. In other words, schools would need to know how they were performing relative to other similar schools. Second, teachers and other professional staff would need extensive training in how to interpret and use test scores; e.g., to examine differences in ability and achievement scores; to be able to apply relevant statistical concepts, such as mean, median and standard deviation. Third, inspection visits would have to be frequent enough so that the opportunities to interact with the inspectors would serve as a regular stimulus. In general, however, it can be said that this system is stronger with respect to accountability than to increasing the incentives for change in poorly performing schools.

A second approach to assessment is a "National-Diversified System". Here the school would be responsible for designing its own examination system, which would reflect the curriculum as it is taught in the school, and which would consist, at minimum, of some testing of students prior to graduation so as to assist in placing students in the appropriate track at the next level. In addition, the schools would be expected to conduct self-study assessments which incorporated not only testing results but also other forms of data collection, such as School-Based Review. The role of the Inspectorate would be to assist schools in conducting and interpreting these data in a broader context, in addition to performing the second function indicated above. An overall level of accountability would be provided by visiting peer review committees every five to seven years, which would give a thorough critique of the school's curriculum, climate, facilities, instruction, management, etc. based on an examination of the school's self-studies, and observations and interviews. Schools scoring poorly on this peer review would be placed on probation, and required to make specific changes within a specified period of time or face more serious action.

If the National-Tight System is strong in providing system-wide data to determine how well Dutch education is performing at the level of the school, region, and country, the strength of the National-Diversified System is in providing the maximum incentive for schools to examine their own curriculum, results and relative performance on a regular basis. Because they are responsible for the assessment process, they are more likely to regard it as meaningful, and therefore to use it. In addition, by incorporating a third review mechanism through the visiting peer committees, the probability of continuing very low performance is substantially reduced. On the other hand, this system provides the Ministry with no greater means of establishing national-level accountability than currently exists.

The final scenario is a "Two-Level System", which is essentially a combination of two. It would consist, first, of the National-Diversified system described above. In addition, the government would be empowered to carry out several forms of national assessment: a continuation and extension of the PPON or similar efforts to other levels, and a substitution of an intermittent testing programme to examine achievement in specific subjects at specific grade levels on an episodic basis in all schools. The advantage of this system is that it retains the self-motivating quality of the diversified approach, while providing increased access to true national level data which could be disaggregated to the school level.

In our view, the third scenario is least likely to change the overall balance of authority between school and government. The "Tight System" could radically reduce school autonomy, and the "Diversified System" would not provide the visible output accountability measures that are envisioned in the proposed governance model shift. Clearly, however, these descriptions are no more than outlines that may guide attention to some of the practical and legal issues that would need to be worked out, and Dutch policy advisors are likely to invent several other options before any choices are finally made.

Some possible effects of a new steering policy on different groups

One implication of this policy is already being confronted by the government. Efforts to change the role of the Ministry from monitoring procedures to assessing goal attainment must also be based on a clear redefinition of roles within the agency, and the provision of training and reinforcement for new roles.

Some restructuring of the Inspectorate has already occurred. The Inspectorate has traditionally not been in the forefront of educational policy development or assessment. As a policy analysis body, it has taken a subsidiary role to the several government supported advisory bodies and the umbrella organisations. In addition, it has been a relatively minor actor in the recurrent review of schools' and teachers' work. Recently, however, it has been reorganised, and universities have been added to its portfolio. Although it does not yet have the degree of authority of the Inspectorates of Britain or France, there are clearly aspirations to build up its role as an independent source of feedback on goal achievement at the institutional level.

There are additional implications for schools and universities: as in many other European countries, central administration in colleges and universities has been relatively less powerful, for example, than in the United States or Canada. With financial and personnel policies set by the government, and little institutional control over student access to programmes, it is not surprising that university administration has been more responsive than entrepreneurial. The central staff of most universities are perceived to lack deep administrative experience and capability. In addition, because the position of Dean (*Dekaan*) rotates, there is also little permanent administrative potency at middle levels. Such capacity must be generated, either at university or college level before one can reasonably expect a high level of management initiative to emerge.

School leaders, like university administrators, have had few demands made upon them while many of the procedures of the education system were centrally governed. In all except larger elementary schools, school leaders usually have teaching obligations, while the number of administrators in secondary schools is typically quite small. Nevertheless, if "steering at a distance" is to produce the local innovation and success that is hoped for, individuals at the school level must at least be competent in heretofore unneeded skills, such as developing personnel policies and budgeting.

The extensive Support System, particularly the Institute for Test Development (CITO), may feel real strains if a shift to output monitoring is achieved. The need for schools to align curricula and tests at the junior secondary (and possibly the elementary) level will engender far greater pressures for collaboration between CITO and SLO (the Curriculum Development Institute), which are located at some physical distance from one another. The National Pedagogical Centres, which have already gained experience in offering in-service programmes to teachers under the aegis of their role in helping with the implementation of previous national reforms, may be asked to perform new tasks by schools or may choose to market their training talents.

Primary Teacher Training Institutions (PABOs), on the other hand, will lose a guaranteed source of income if the proposal to shift resources for in-service to the school are enacted. Many of these are small institutions, already drastically affected by declining student enrolments and merger demands, are in a poor position to rapidly mount a forceful entrepreneurial effort in the new in-service market. On the other hand, the government cannot afford to let them decline further, because of the projected shortage of teachers that will occur within the next decade.

In summary, the change in steering policy is largely dependent on the willingness of educational institutions outside of the Ministry to accept their new role as managers and even entrepreneurs within a more open and less regulated system. The extent to which this opportunity matches not only with willingness, but experience and skill, is critical.

Chapter 4

ISSUES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Primary education

The primary schools provide an example of both the evolving strengths and weaknesses of the Dutch education system.

On the one hand, the ability of the schools to absorb a major innovation — the merger of the nursery and primary school systems — during a period of financial constraint is impressive. The Background Report indicates that in 1987, only two years after the merger, 35 per cent of the schools were using the differentiated/individualised instructional approaches that support the goals of the new primary school, and one-third were involved in significant curricular renewal. Although this was far from the aspirations of the policy, we regard this as a substantial achievement, attributable to the commitment and child-centred pedagogical preferences of educators as well as to the policy. In addition, there are impressive curriculum innovations, such as *Wiskobas* math (a programme that uses many manipulatives), that are well diffused throughout the system. The primary system has also borne the greatest pressure of accommodating immigrant children who speak little or no Dutch, but seems to have addressed this issue with determination. Overall, there is a consensus that most primary schools are performing well.

On the other hand, the primary school system is also currently in a fragile state, largely because of the combined impact of changing legal conditions, and the relatively level funding of educational expenses. It is at the primary level that cultural pressure to retain the smaller schools, despite their recognised economic inefficiencies, is greatest. (It is apparently an unwritten law that young children should be able to walk to school unless they live in a very remote rural area.) This, coupled with the reductions in staff work time, has created many personnel problems that have significant educational implications.

One issue related to the new thrust towards autonomy is the lack of specialised management and leadership at the school level. Many smaller primary school leaders have only one day a week to perform administrative duties. This leaves them with no available "official" time for guidance, curriculum and school plans, and assisting teachers in didactics and other professional development. While most primary school leaders work far beyond the civil service minimum, in the case of the partially released "head teacher", each hour spent on school-wide development must be taken from classroom responsibilities, creating a difficult tension between the needs of the pupils in a specific classroom, and the needs of children and adults throughout the whole school.

Another issue concerns the schools' reduced autonomy in personnel decisions. For example, the number of part-time teachers has increased significantly as a consequence of negotiated

union contracts. In secondary schools this creates difficulties in arranging school-wide meetings or work, but at the primary school the consequences are that many classrooms have more than one teacher. Young children, who at this age are expected to bond to the teacher as a significant adult, are often faced with one teacher in the morning and another in the afternoon. Furthermore, schools are not able to determine which teachers will be assigned to the school. Again, in larger schools personnel flexibility permits rational assignment of teachers to classrooms. In a small school, however, a vacancy in the 4-5 year old room may be filled with an assigned teacher whose entire career has been spent teaching 10 or 11 year-olds, a condition which is clearly disadvantageous to the children. Because personnel assignments and change in staff allocation often happen in the summer, schools have few opportunities to address these personnel shifts in a thoughtful way. The assumption that school leaders can, under these circumstances, become effective personnel managers if they are only provided with more budgetary autonomy may be wishful thinking.

A recent regulation defining a four-year old as only 0.54 of a child for the determination of teacher assignments to schools further reduced personnel resources in primary schools. This highly unpopular measure will be withdrawn according to the new government coalition agreement. Another disruptive cost-saving regulation concerned the replacement of sick teachers only after they had been out for two days. This measure has already been withdrawn.

Third, the Background Report notes that the expectations about the self-renewal potential for individual school work plans have not been realised; In our view this is not surprising given the lack of time during the school year for teachers to work together, and of experience with school-based reviews among school leaders and teachers.

Finally, policy emphasizes the need for primary schools to take more responsibility for special needs children within regular classrooms, yet provides no significant resources for training, differentiated staffing, or other support mechanisms that would permit the schools to address this challenge effectively. Special budget allocations to schools with a high proportion of minorities and/or students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds address this resource allocation issue, but very indirectly. The additional monies are used primarily to make slight reductions in class size, rather than to make more dramatic changes in teaching modes or staffing and services.

In summary, the functioning of the primary school system is stretched to the limits, particularly among the smaller schools. The responsibilities of the primary school in terms of guidance and support of individual pupils are great, but the resources are very limited for a system that appears to be so well funded over all. While primary schools would, in theory, welcome more autonomy, teachers and administrators fear that autonomy will come with many additional responsibilities and few resources. We agree that, were this the case, the fragile system in many schools would be further strained. We regard this as a clear case of the tension between the strong cultural support of small schools, and the reality that resources are not always allocated to support that value.

Lower secondary education

The lower secondary system is a critical but weak link in the Dutch education system. As we have noted elsewhere, the "problem of lower secondary" has been at the heart of policy discussions for at least twenty years, yet there has been, in effect, no system-wide reform. The problem seems to lie in the inability of the usual consultative decision-making process to create a consensus about the nature of change.

The Dutch school system requires that students choose between different types of schools — university preparatory, general, or vocational — at the end of primary school. There is evidence that this system reinforces social inequality, and a wide agreement that this early choice among a rather bewildering array of different types of schools increases the number of students opting for the more prestigious streams. The greatest increase has been felt in the five-year general secondary track (HAVO), which is viewed as a "safe choice" by many parents.

However, as noted earlier, proposals to eliminate streaming at this level and substitute a comprehensive middle school have not been popular among the majority of parents. The failure to gain popular support for structural change led the Liberal and Christian Democrat coalition to request the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR) to examine an alternative, which was published in 1986. The "basic education" proposal consisted of a recommendation to leave the structure alone, but to develop a common curriculum that would be taught in all schools, irrespective of their stream. Proponents of the comprehensive school are still reluctant to abandon the proposal for structural reform and fully support the proposed compromise, but the new government coalition has agreed to press forward with a slightly modified basic education bill.

We cover the above ground primarily to demonstrate the obvious: the junior secondary level has been in a state of "suspended reform" for a very long time. The consequence of this extended period of waiting has been to freeze innovation and planful decision-making at this level. Problems noted in previous OECD reports and government documents (such as the articulation between primary and secondary schools) have waited for a system solution, and have therefore not been addressed. Other issues in upper secondary have also awaited a resolution of the dilemma of how extensive the curriculum and/or structural changes will be at the lower level.

In the interim, weaknesses at the junior secondary level, particularly in vocational education (LBO) and lower general education (MAVO) have been exacerbated by the merger process described in Chapter 2. The comment in the Background Report that "developments in junior secondary vocational education have not been altogether positive" is clearly an understatement.

The data presented in the report and other documents show that LBO is an increasingly isolated stream that serves primarily students who have no other options and produces an alarming number of students who leave the system with no marketable skills. Indeed, the Background Report statistics indicate that unemployment is higher among LBO completers than among those who drop out of other streams with no qualifications at all, and the apprenticeship system, into which LBO pupils are supposed to flow, is increasingly drawing on graduates from other, higher streams because of weaknesses in LBO candidates.

A further problem is that LBO is becoming increasingly gender-segregated: many of the old "domestic studies" schools for girls are closing or shrinking, and teachers are far more likely to recommend boys to attend LBO than girls, particularly if the child is from a lower socio-economic status. The per centage of students enrolling in LBO has dropped more precipitously for females than males, from 31 per cent in 1975 to 21 per cent in 1985 (OECD, 1987).

LBO schools have, as a consequence, become increasingly isolated from other streams. In the unregulated merger process, few schools from other streams wish to link their future to an LBO. An obvious merger possibility informally supported by the Ministry is the blending of LBO and MAVO (vocational and lower general streams) to provide students who are likely to end up in the job market at the age of 18 with a flexible but less vocational experience from 12 to 15. This option is, however, avoided whenever possible by MAVO schools. The reason? Parents of children who are recommended for the MAVO track do not want to limit their possibilities, and would prefer a MAVO school that has merged with the general secondary school (HAVO).

This isolation has further reduced the attractiveness and viability of LBO in many parts of the country according to observers in all sectors.

We cannot emphasize too strongly that problems in LBO are not, in our view, a consequence of poor teaching or efforts at the school level to serve the needs of the low-achieving student. They are, rather, a consequence of the lack of policy priority placed on the renewal of the LBO stream, and of the national unwillingness until now to challenge the existing structure of lower secondary education. Proposals for a new-style lower vocational education (VBO), which would better integrate academic and pre-vocational skill development, are as yet sketchy. However, if VBO is premised on MAVO/LBO mergers, it may further segregate children from lower and higher social backgrounds in different educational institutions, resulting in a two-class education system.

Except within the MAVO stream (part of a major renewal programme thrust by the government in the late 1970s and early 1980s), innovation at the junior secondary level has been primarily the result of personal convictions of teachers and opportunities created by the school head. This stagnation is of concern given the consistent research findings indicating that relatively minor changes in the internal structure, curriculum and didactics can have relatively significant impacts on personal development among young adolescents. In other words, the junior secondary years are a high leverage point for educational reform.

The above description may appear bleak, but there are many indications that broad support for the basic education bill has emerged, and a belief that it is time to get on with providing a three-year core of common education. Yet, even where there is strong social consensus, there are still difficulties. These are again most obvious in the case of the less able student.

In particular, many voice concern about whether the lower stream students will be able to meet the academic achievement levels proposed as part of the basic education policy. The Background Report's statement that "the introduction of basic education should bring junior secondary vocational education more into line with other (streams)" seems overly optimistic given the concentration of students who are both self- and socially-defined as not having the capacity to "work with their brains".

Some predicted that up to 20 per cent of the students in regular education programmes will not "make the grade", on minimum achievement levels (which would not be inconsistent with the rate of underachievement in primary schools), yet little thought appears to have been given to how to deal with children who will be labeled as "failures" at the age of 14. In our discussions of the basic education bill, we did not hear serious proposals to introduce mastery learning or other educational strategies that are based on the assumption that all children can become functional in basic skills and in cultural literacy. At a time when the policy goal is to increase the quality of education, particularly among lower achievers, it is ironic that a substantial group of these students may become even more marginal in the educational marketplace.

Upper secondary education

Issues facing upper secondary education are at once more complex and potentially easier to solve. They are more complex because the needs and choices of students poised at the edge of final career decisions have resulted in a wide variety of different informal paths within a system that, on paper, looks rather tidy. They are simpler because the big problem of what to do about low performing students has largely been transferred from the educational sector to the employment or social welfare sectors.

Vocational education

From reviewing the evidence, it appears that the vocational stream in the upper secondary system is operating with considerable effectiveness, despite concerns voiced in the Background Report concerning drop-out rates. Among the many strong features of the system are:

- Rapid growth. In what is largely a consumer-driven secondary system, this to be an indicator that many Dutch parents and their children view this stream as a highly appropriate vehicle for labour market and life chances.
- Changing intake, with more MAVO and LBO students entering. (We speculate that, with the implementation of a three-year basic education programme, more students may enter MBO at the beginning of their upper secondary training. Thus, while the student enrolment in upper secondary education is projected to decline for the next five to seven years, MBO may continue to grow.) The apparent ability of this system to adapt to the entry of students who would, in previous times, entered the apprenticeship system or other non-educational activities suggests that it is adapting to the economic and individual needs of students.
- Contribution to gender equity. The enrolment of women in middle level vocational education past the age of 16 has increased more rapidly than for males, and relatively more rapidly in the 1980s than for the different streams of general education.
- Successful student achievement in the more technical/demanding courses of study. Higher Vocational Institutes report that MBO students are often preferred to HAVO students, and are well prepared for higher education.
- Curricular and structural innovation. There has been a considerable adaptation and innovation, including the development of more short vocational courses (KMBO), part-time vocational courses that can be combined with apprenticeships (BBO), and within the full-time vocational stream itself (MBO).
- Verbal evidence that the many mergers demanded in this sector have been handled quite effectively, with minimal loss of energy.

Further efforts are already in the planning phase for the vocational programmes. There has been discussion about developing local or regionally-based programmes. In addition, the recent coalition agreement stipulates a new independent ministerially-appointed Committee on Education and the Labour Market which will focus on both short- and longer-term measures to improve the quality of programmes.

The Background Report points to problems, a number of which were confirmed from other data sources. Many observers are concerned about poor articulation with the labour market. All complain about the relative underfunding of MBO and other vocational programmes as compared with general and university preparatory programmes and point to the long-term consequences of the declining infrastructure and the lack of up-to-date equipment. The rapid growth of this sector, coupled with growing equipment costs, and competition for potential teachers with the private sector, make the financial conditions of this stream precarious. (The government recognises the problem of attracting teachers to this stream, and has negotiated a higher salary scale for MBO.)

In addition, the MBO stream receives less than its share of services from the general support structure, in part because of its many specialised needs. Another concern voiced by some is that MBO is too often viewed as a uniform stream, whereas in fact it is composed of many distinct and unmerged programmes, many of which are as gender and class segregated as the lower secondary streams that feed into them. Finally, there is a need for curriculum renovation in many areas, as well as improved equipment.

In our view, MBO/KMBO, despite its strengths, needs more attention, beginning with the Committee on Education and the Labour Market. In particular, we are concerned that there may be a fine line between today's flexible and responsive system and one that could be perceived as unco-ordinated, poorly articulated and consequently wasteful tomorrow. Co-ordination is a major issue that must be faced by the Committee, which will need to provide advice on how to improve articulation between MBO/KMBO/BBO programmes. Improved co-ordination with the tertiary sector education system is another issue raised by members of the secondary and tertiary systems. The problems of organising sensible relationships between different programmes in the vocational education sector is compounded when the need also to co-ordinate with the non-school based education/employment training sector (apprenticeship training, training for the unemployed, and adult vocational education) is taken into consideration. At minimum, some consideration needs to be given to questions of organised co-operation in information and guidance procedures, utilisation of resources, co-ordination of curricula, and the development of planned adjustments based on labour market projections.

General education

There also seems to be little concern about the performance of the six-year-long university preparatory courses (VWO, gymnasium and atheneum). This does not mean that participants in and observers of this stream are complacent: concerns were expressed, in particular, about the low levels of curriculum innovation, which produces students who score well on national and international achievement examinations, but who are not necessarily trained in integrative or higher-order thinking skills. In addition, efforts to introduce curricula in math and science that are more deductively based has not been particularly successful. Where they have been implemented, they are often regarded as a "lower track", and therefore are not popular. This has significant implications for the possibility of increasing the number of women in the "exact sciences" since research in many countries suggests that girls often learn better with deductively based curricula. Most observers also agree that didactics are traditional in this stream: it is rare for students to be exposed to classes that are not based on teacher lectures and questioning. Students and others complain that the final year is, in particular, boring because it consists only of cramming for examinations, and some attribute part of the high drop-out rate in the last year of VWO to the "boredom factor". (These students are not genuine drop-outs. Most apparently do not leave the education system permanently but find an alternative entrance point to universities or HBO.) Nevertheless, there is agreement that the upper 17 or so per cent of the age group enrolled in this stream typically receive a solid preparation for university and for eventual performance in an increasingly international economy.

The weak link in the system, as demonstrated both by the Background Report and our interviews, is in the five-year-long programme of general secondary education stream (HAVO). HAVO has been increasing in enrolment, probably as a consequence of Dutch parents' belief that the life chances of a student in an academic (e.g. general) stream are greater than in the vocational streams. The facts, however, suggest otherwise.

Rates of repeating a grade due to failure to progress are higher in HAVO than in other streams: in the last year of HAVO, nearly 20 per cent must repeat (OECD, 1987). The "drop out" rate (leaving without qualifications or a job) is higher than either VWO or MBO. This is not a new phenomenon, but has been evidence since the seventies (OECD, 1987). Many students who leave HAVO without qualifications are likely to return to the education system through MBO, but in this case they are required to repeat up to several years because they have had no vocational background. Many observers agree that HAVO curriculum is just "watered down

VWO", yet the theoretical nature of much of the VWO curriculum is particularly inappropriate for a group of students who are intelligent, but who have not been entirely successful in the past because of learning style differences.

Those who advocate greater efficiency in the system are concerned that many HAVO students who have passed all of their examinations are unable to perform adequately in Higher Vocational Education, which is the third level education system into which they are intended to feed. Twenty-four per cent of all HAVO students find it necessary to take a sideways path, repeating years in the secondary vocational stream (MBO); 22 per cent go to VWO (usually to take an extra two years) after completing HAVO in order to enhance their chances for success in HBO (see the Background Report). A smaller per centage goes from HAVO to VWO and then to university.

In summary, the HAVO stream, as in other developed countries, appears to be a poorly performing partner in which many able students are served a curriculum that does not adequately prepare them for jobs or higher education. This judgement may seem harsh, but we can draw no other conclusion from both the statistics and the comments heard from different sectors. Of greater concern is that, although there is a private consensus about the problem, there are no significant policy initiatives that address it. Given the relatively long time-frame necessary to create significant changes in the education system of the Netherlands, this should be cause for considerable concern. It seems likely that, in the absence of other interventions, the HAVO population will continue to grow and continue to create costly career bottlenecks for large numbers of students.

Personnel issues in the education system

At the beginning of this chapter it was said that personnel issues create a number of dilemmas for the Dutch school system. In this section we will elaborate on these, and some additional points with regard to the government's concern about teacher supply and deployment. These personnel issues are almost impossible to separate from the government's proposed change in steering policy: without energetic, well-trained professional staff at the school level, the concept of "steering at a distance" is an empty one.

Teachers' work

The initial problem is superficially simple. Teacher working conditions have markedly eroded over the past five or so years. Until the mid-1980s, education was an expanding employment sector, and from 1970 to 1984, the number of teachers increased by one-third. Although growing, teacher salaries were declining relative to other professions, but this had not yet affected public perception of the social status of teachers as compared with other professionals (Besnard and Burger, 1987, pp. 2-4). However, there has been an abrupt shift in the respect for teaching and teachers, and there is consensus that teaching is currently perceived as a dead-end, poorly paid and highly regulated job. Not surprisingly, the number of HAVO students who indicate that they would like to become teachers is decreasing; the number who actually enter teacher training is even lower.

Teaching is increasingly a marginal occupation as well: 32 per cent of all primary teachers do not have full-time jobs, but work an average of just over half-time; in secondary education, the proportion of part-time teachers is even higher (53 per cent). More and more of these part-time teachers are women. Although this may be viewed as a positive step in a culture in which

women have largely been outside the permanent job market, we suspect that an increase in part-time females teaching staffs will further undermine the social status of the profession. Furthermore, although the Background Report points out that experienced teachers in the Netherlands are well paid, a beginning primary teacher makes marginally more, after taxes and other deductions, than a welfare recipient, and it takes 26 years until the low initial salary has approximately doubled at the top of the salary scale. The position of new teachers appears worse when it is noted that they are also more likely to be employed part-time, and have little employment security during a period when overall enrolment is still declining due to the principle of last-in-first-out in personnel policy.

It is much too easy, as some have done, to blame teacher unions for negotiating personnel restrictions that protect the interest of current members at the expense of future members and children. National personnel policies are arrived at in the same consensus-driven manner as other educational policies, and all central actors, including the umbrella organisations and the Ministry, have played either an active or a consenting role in these developments. Any resolution of personnel problems that inhibit the development of schools must also involve all parties as active problem-solvers. It is certainly unlikely that unions will alter their obligation to protect incumbents while further cuts, salary freezes and job losses are under discussion, or when the public appears to have such a negative view of teachers' competence.

However, working conditions in schools, as well as salaries and promotion possibilities are central factors leading to the dissatisfaction of current teachers, and the decreasing interest of able students in entering the teaching profession. While we advocate increasing the starting salaries of teachers to make them equivalent to other civil servants with similar training, this alone would not be enough to redress the problems presented to us. Furthermore, we view the discussion of non-salary working conditions in most of the documents presented to us as unduly concerned with traditional labour issues, such as the number of working hours, sick leave, child care and promotion/salary increase opportunities.

By working conditions, we mean the structural characteristics of the way in which teachers' jobs are organised, as compared with other countries. Research conducted in a variety of countries suggests that there are six conditions in addition to salaries, fringe benefits and resources that enhance teachers commitment to their work (Louis and Smith, forthcoming):

- *respect from relevant adults*, such as the administrators in the school and district, parents, and the community at large;
- *influence over decision-making* that augments the teachers' sense of control over their work setting;
- *frequent and stimulating professional interaction* among peers (e.g. collaborative work/collegial relationships within the school);
- opportunity to make full *use of existing skills and knowledge*, and to acquire new skills and knowledge (self-development); the opportunity to experiment;
- structures and procedures that contribute to a high sense of efficacy (e.g. *mechanisms permitting teachers to obtain frequent and accurate feedback about their performance* and the specific effects of their performance on student learning);
- a sense of *congruence between personal goals and the school's goals* (low alienation).

We submit that many of these conditions are absent for Dutch teachers in the current environment. To be more specific.

Teachers' sense of respect for the profession has tumbled during a period when serious questions have been raised about the quality of the education system, including the quality of people who wish to become teachers. Many people told us that teachers come from the ranks of

students who have planned their educational careers so poorly that they have closed out other options — but we doubt this, based on the amazingly facile way in which Dutch youth move around in the various educational streams in order to prepare themselves for a chosen vocation; reports about the lack of mathematical literacy among primary school teachers, and the failure of schools to serve the needs of poor and minority children have further eroded the teachers' sense of efficacy. It is not surprising that teachers are leaving their jobs where they have other options, retiring early and taking more sick leave (Besnard and Burger, 1987) — all of which are ways of expressing their stress and disaffection from work.

Dutch teachers have few opportunities to work together. The increasing number of part-time teachers, the complexities of school work, and the lack of scheduled "conference time" in the work week mean that any serious school development or curriculum work must take place in the evening or on weekends. Since full-time teachers already work, on average, much longer than 40 hours per week, this is unrealistic. The Background Report notes that curriculum work by teachers has not occurred, and that school work plans have not had the developmental benefits that were anticipated, but offer no solutions about how this situation could be relieved.

This points to an additional problem: the narrow definition of teachers' work. In a number of OECD countries teachers are expected to participate in guidance activities, in leadership and administrative functions or other school maintenance tasks, or they have opportunities to be seconded to institutions of higher education or service centres where they become involved in development or support activities for brief periods of time. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, teachers' work is largely confined to the teaching-learning context of the classroom.

Individual teachers feel a low sense of influence over their work, which they perceive as highly regulated by the central government, the umbrella organisations, and the national unions. Although they have heard promises of more autonomy, they do not believe that the current proposals will make any real change in the degree to which their own situation is bounded by requirements imposed from outside the school. The ability to experiment and try new things may be further constrained by the "invisible curriculum" of centralised attainment standards — the downside of short-term accountability. The Background Report notes that the current system of continuing professional development, which is provided by the teacher training institutions, is not always well matched to teachers' needs. We agree that giving teachers more influence over in-service is desirable, but note that real changes would require more time allocated for in-service and school development than is currently the case. Simply changing the locus of decision-making in a system that is strained for resources will not automatically create improvements.

We do not mean to paint an overly dismal picture: there are many opportunities for teachers to find satisfaction in what is largely an excellent system of education. We do, however, wish to draw attention to the fact that decreasing flexibility and variety in teachers' jobs is a serious issue, and one that has not been comprehensively addressed in the Netherlands, although it is increasingly prominent in other countries. The recognition of the problem of teacher morale is high, but it requires further definition and a working out of changes that can be encompassed within the financial constraints that will persist for some years.

Management capacity in schools

One aspect of school organisation that has a great impact on teachers is the role of the head. Improved school organisation and management are central to the Dutch government's proposal to reduce regulation and decentralise procedural aspects of education to the school level, but they will also be necessary to revitalise the internal life of the school. This will, however, be a massive challenge: there is currently only one programme that provides pre-service training to

heads (recently begun at the University of Amsterdam), and a limited system for delivering in-service. Currently heads are selected primarily because of their skill in teaching, and are then simply told to get on with the job of running the school. In a very small primary school, this may be realistic; in large urban primary school or a complex secondary school with several streams it is decidedly unrealistic.

It may be observed that the system has worked reasonably well until now; why try to create an expensive system to "fix" something that is not clearly broken? The answer is that the demands on school leaders will increase rapidly if the proposed changes in steering policy are implemented. We agree that a talented individual can learn how to be a leader and manager through trial and error; some of the best heads will have an instinct for the task, or will have observed an effective head closely enough so that the personal learning process will be shortened. We also agree that formal course work cannot make a leader of someone who does not have the temperament. Nevertheless, in a decentralised system, school leadership will require specific skills and knowledge that are not currently demanded and which are not instinctive: school budgeting and cost containment, personnel supervision and policy development, legal aspects of the education system, how to carry out action research for school development, the management of mergers, etc. Many potential curricular materials to support these and other courses have been designed as part of previous national educational innovations, such as the MAVO and *Scholen in Ontwikkeling* (SIO) project.

It is preferable that basic management skills and knowledge be acquired before moving a teacher into a position in school administration, particularly in a period where the demands on leadership are very high because of uncertainty among teachers, parents and students. However, the development of more pre-service training does not deal with the reality that most current school heads will remain in their positions for many years. In addition to the temporary need for in-service for current heads, there will always be a demand for in-service to apprise leaders of new developments that may have leadership and management implications, and for opportunities to share insights and to hone skills. However, there is currently no in-service system for administrators, although several of the National Pedagogic Centres (NPCs) offer occasional training that is specifically designed for heads.

Teacher supply and training

Despite our concerns about the development of school leaders, the problem of producing teachers for tomorrow's schools will be an even more difficult challenge for a number of reasons in addition to the low starting salary. Attraction to a field invariably lags behind the job-market needs: just as the number of teachers produced in the 1980s far exceeded the demand for new teachers, so the anticipated needs are likely to create a slow response. While governments can speed up this process through incentives and regulations, it is not fully controllable: for example, although the government has already experimented with some efforts to attract students into shortage teaching areas, such as economics, math and science, students apparently believe that problems with job prospects in education outweigh the financial incentives offered. On the other hand, evidence from the United States, suggests that when the job market really does open up, students will be attracted back from other equivalent career options if they believe that teacher working conditions are improving.

More problematic, however, than attracting future students are two other issues: first the selective problems of structural undersupply and rigidity; and second, the capacity of teacher training programmes to produce teachers.

The immediate areas of teacher shortage in the Netherlands are in precisely those fields where institutes of middle and higher vocational education (MBOs and HBOs) are looking for

new personnel, and industry is also experiencing shortages — the technical and economic disciplines. The most effective way to deal with this serious supply problem would be to increase the number of students electing the appropriate subjects at secondary and university levels — particularly among women, who are under-represented in sciences, math, and economics. Various efforts to promote education in these disciplines are anticipated, but it seems unlikely that the expansion will be perfectly attuned to all of the partners' needs, and also likely that secondary education, especially science and the emerging technical disciplines, will come out with the greatest unmet teaching staff needs.

Supply problems are increasing, and are likely to be exacerbated as a result of the complex and specialised teacher preparation and licensing system, which limits secondary teachers trained in HBOs to certain school streams and levels, and will limit all secondary teachers to one subject. While specialisation and expertise are desirable, the need for flexibility in deployment of teachers under conditions of mergers, growth of some parts and decline in others is also great. Some mechanisms for alternative certification and licensing routes that would permit secondary teachers who are currently teaching in one stream to display appropriate levels of achievement to teach in another subject/stream might help to relieve these short-term problems; in the long run it is appropriate to ask whether a single training and licensing process for teachers of general academic subjects in the secondary schools would be beneficial under conditions where the various streams of secondary education are often housed within the same school. In addition, we would advocate consideration of mechanisms to certify more rapidly individuals who have completed university training and who wish to teach in upper secondary schools, and similarly streamlined mechanisms that might attract individuals interested in career changes. (The latter suggestion would also require changing salary schedules so that mid-career shifts would not be financially impossible.)

Since there is every reason to anticipate teacher shortages among primary teachers, the capacities of non-university-based teacher training programmes must also be examined. During our time in the Netherlands, many spoke of the need to include new subjects and new ideas in teacher training. To produce the changes in teacher preparation that will meet the needs of tomorrow's schools for individualisation, the ability to handle special needs children and children of multi-cultural backgrounds, to adapt to rapidly changing social conditions and organisational changes in education while, at the same time, to be involved in curriculum innovation and new didactic methods will be a challenge. Are teacher training programmes as they are currently funded and supported prepared to handle this?

The teacher training programmes have suffered severe changes in size, staffing and institutional auspices in the recent past. As the number of students in teacher training has declined sharply, early retirement and redundancy have resulted in staff who, as one individual put it, "are all alike" — between 40 and 50 years of age — and who have not been provided with significant opportunities for professional refreshment. The merger of the primary and nursery school was as difficult for the primary teacher training institutions as for the schools: many jobs were lost, and smaller institutions have a skeletal number of staff who specialise in early childhood education. The creation of the new higher vocational system (HBO, see below, Chapter 5) resulted in the merger of some primary and all secondary teacher training institutes into larger structures — structures in which the technical disciplines were often at the centre of administrative interest and development activity. While merged programmes are becoming stronger, the time that must be devoted to this process has all but eliminated the extra energy available for curricular and pedagogic innovation.

Unlike the secondary teacher training programmes, primary teacher training institutions were not required to merge into HBO institutions, and 25 remain independent. Some of these

are too small to sustain a viable training programme over the many subjects and student developmental levels that must be covered in primary school. Some that appear larger consist of multiple campus locations that operate autonomously. One observer indicated that there were effectively as many as 60 of these very small institutions.

Having already been buffeted by cutbacks and mergers, the teacher training institutes will receive another economic blow if the government's proposal to take in-service money from the teacher training institutes, and give it directly to schools is enacted. Although much of this will come back to the tertiary institutions, it will do so indirectly and it is not guaranteed.

Given these circumstance it is not surprising that teacher training programmes have become somewhat isolated in the education system. Universities and teacher training colleges alike indicate that there is little contact between people who do research on education, and those who teach teachers. Little or no research is done in the teacher training institutes themselves. Actors in the educational support system report that there is also little direct consultation, co-operation or interaction between the National Curriculum Development Institute (SLO) and the teacher training institutes, which means that the former is cut off from one of the best routes for disseminating new curricula, while the latter are also somewhat detached from the most current research and development on curriculum and pedagogy. The National Pedagogic Centres (NPCs) have occasionally co-operated with teacher training institutes to provide services to schools, but this is not a prominent feature of their mandate. Isolation makes staff renewal all the more difficult.

We do not intend to comment on the potential contribution that the teacher training programmes may make to educational renewal in the Netherlands, but to point out that the government's and the schools' expectations must be based on a realistic appraisal of the incompleteness of the transformation in this sector as well as in the elementary and secondary sectors. In our view, there will be an inevitable need to merge the remaining independent PABOs into the higher vocational system in order to meet the policy goals of efficiency of scale and increased quality. This will require consideration of ways of providing denominational teachers with appropriate training for their role in infusing specific values into the curriculum, for example through more intensive clinical experiences. In the short run, however, mergers are quite costly. Thus, if the teacher training institutions are to be prepared for the production of a much larger number of teachers at some point in the next decade, attention now to their internal capacities and their external networks is imperative.

The support system in education

The Dutch support system for elementary and secondary education is elabourate and well funded. In addition, the quality of the work performed in this system is, in comparison with other countries, high. Incompleteness in this area requires attention primarily to filling the gaps in co-operation and communication.

In our view, the effectiveness of the system is lower than its potential due to problems of organisational identity and system boundaries that are somewhat artificially defined. Because the system is designed to house different functions — research, testing and test development, curriculum development, applied action programmes and external support — in different agencies, some problems of co-ordination are inevitable. (This is not to suggest that some other form of organisation would be preferable because the alternatives produce other, but different forms of inefficiency.)

Ideally, the entire support system would function so that the school and/or teacher is the primary focus of all efforts. Needs of individual schools, but preferably of groups of schools,

could be identified by local guidance and national pedagogic centres, who could serve as an access point to testing, curriculum and research help, as well as to the available skills in all of the NPCs. In the perfect world, there would be no significant redundancy of effort, but where information or help exists, schools could access it with a minimum of effort.

In practice, however, the National Pedagogic Centres (NPCs) are permitted to use each other's staffs or work with each other's schools only after a somewhat cumbersome formal agreement has been reached. While this protects the interests of the umbrella organisations to maintain influence within their own NPC, it detracts from the principle of minimising redundancy and maximising the opportunities to meet a school's needs. In brief, the regulations limiting the NPCs to "their own schools" serves bureaucratic and political rather than school needs. It must also be underlined that the local guidance centres are only permitted to work with primary schools. Sometimes their knowledge of local issues could be used efficiently in solving problems related either to the lower secondary grades, particularly to the MAVO and LBO streams.

The National Curriculum Development (SLO) and Test Development (CITO) Institutes are isolated not only from each other (there is some co-operation, but inadequate from the perspective of effective alignment of curriculum and assessment), but also from schools. SLO is not permitted to work on implementation or specific issues within a school — a consequence of Article 23, which is interpreted as safeguarding schools from specific intervention in internal subject matter decisions. CITO does not suffer from this constraint, and is able to work more closely with schools, but lacks a large staff familiar with problems of school change and implementation — these people are largely located in the NPCs/Local Guidance Centres. As noted above, all of these institutions are disconnected from the teacher training institutions, which provide the bulk of the in-service to schools and teachers, although the law on support structures states that contacts with teacher training institutions must be established.

It should be emphasized that we do not view this as a serious educational issue. The institutions and individuals involved are both competent and interested in doing the best for schools. In our view, the extension of the Article 23 limitations to this group of institutions — which are not government agencies, but independent foundations with no power to coerce schools and no vested interest in increasing their persuasive authority — is an unnecessary impediment to educational innovation and improvement. It would also be worthwhile, at a later stage, to consider putting the various support structures, teacher training institutions and any future school leader training programmes into a single legal framework.

Chapter 5

HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

The impact of recent policies on the structure, governance and operations of the tertiary system is more fully developed than in the primary and secondary systems. In particular, the "steering at a distance" policies have already taken hold. The rate of change in the fast-growing adult education sector is less visible, because much of it is not part of the government subsidised system, but also appears great.

In rapidly changing institutions, individual discomfort is higher than in more stable systems, and the opportunities and incentives to find flaws are high. Nevertheless, there is basic agreement in the tertiary sector that current policy frameworks — including the needs for financial cutbacks, the changes in governance structures, and the need to promote quality — are both acceptable and desirable in the long run. This is not a small achievement. But, as the Background Report notes, the job is not yet completed.

Higher vocational education

The most impressive change in the tertiary sector is the redefinition of the vocational education system, in which 300 institutions that previously served secondary students were merged and reorganised into a system of some 80 institutions of higher vocational education (HBOs). [Translating the term *hoger beroepsonderwijs* into English caused problems for us. It is variously translated as both higher vocational education, as in the Background Report, and professional education. We have chosen to use the term higher vocational education, while recognising that many of what are often termed the "semi-professions" (education, applied engineering, accounting, etc.) are served by the HBO system.] The change in the study programmes to a uniform four years, with the prerequisite of five years of secondary study, occurred in the 1970s, but the mergers did not take place until the mid-1980s, and the formal change in status did not occur until 1986. The HBO sector is clearly a key element in the government's effort to match the educational and economic sectors more fully, and also to improve the country's performance in technical development and production.

Although the transition has been smooth, and HBO representatives report that they are pleased with their current status and progress, there is still work to be done. Critical issues include:

i) how HBO studies are related to university studies;
ii) staffing; and
iii) patterns of recruitment of students.

HBO and university

The Background Report states that "University education and higher vocational education are increasingly moving towards equal status". Yet, when we discussed what this meant, we became increasingly aware that the issue is complex and unresolved.

Equal status does not mean that entrance standards will become more similar – at least in theory. (Practice varies from policy, however, as will be discussed below.)

The policy governing research creates ambiguity. HBOs are permitted to develop "applied research" programmes and are prohibited from basic research, but the distinction between what is applied and basic research, according to most philosophers and sociologists of science, is often difficult to draw. In practice, the policy means that the government will not subsidise research in HBOs, but if the private sector will pay, they are encouraged to go ahead.

The question of student transfer between the two types of institutions, or the development of co-operative course work, is trickier. Regulations that students not having completed VWO are entitled to enrol in any first-year university programme after the completion of the HBO propedeutic phase, and that HBO completers should be eligible to enrol in the third year university programme in the same field were part of the planned articulation. However, this assumption of "distinct but co-ordinated" has not been well received within the universities, particularly the proposal for later transfer. Neither university nor HBO representatives see easy solutions emerging in the foreseeable future. In fact, programmatic co-operation between HBOs and universities is described as almost as limited as before the upgrading of status.

There is clearly no equality in economic status. There is full acceptance of the fact that a graduate from HBO can anticipate making a substantially lower initial salary than a university graduate in a cognate field (engineering, etc.), and this differential is likely to persist throughout the individual's work life. In addition, most HBO faculty are paid on a grade that is between that of secondary teachers and university docents, although the top salary for which a *Hogeschool-docent* is eligible has been raised to be somewhat higher than a junior university (*Universitair docent)* faculty salary grade.

The content of learning is not just divided between the institutions by the ambiguous labels "applied" and "basic", but is also differentiated by rigour. For example, both HBOs and universities offer engineering degrees, although engineering is universally considered to be an applied field. University representatives seem to consider HBO as an alternative for students who fail their propedeutic examination: if the university's "theoretical" material is too difficult, "less demanding" applied course work may still be suitable.

We do not wish to imply that differences are bad, and many countries have tertiary systems with different and non-equivalent institutions. However, there is little consistency in the Dutch discussions about what the differences should be. In the interests of encouraging more rational efforts in the HBOs to conform to their new status as higher education institutions, it would be useful to clarify this issue.

Staffing

Although university faculty are increasingly expected to obtain their doctoral degree early in their careers, faculty in the HBOs are graduates of university or HBO. In many cases it is expected that they will have practical experience in their field before they become teachers, but there are no system-wide policy statements supporting the development of uniform training and background qualifications. Furthermore, to our knowledge, no formal training or development

programmes have been offered to help faculty to think through the long-term role implications of being part of the tertiary system.

It is unusual for faculty in the first phases of higher education to have no more than the qualifications than their students will achieve, unless there are other mechanisms to ensure that those who teach are exceptionally able. However, a number of representatives of the HBO Board expressed concern about their ability to attract "the best and the brightest", because of competition with industry.

Normally it is not difficult to maintain interest in the professoriate even in disciplines where private sector remuneration is high. Prestige is a factor (university faculty ranked fourth in the hierarchy of occupational prestige in a recent Dutch study, for example), as is the flexibility and autonomy of the work environment. Furthermore, although the career structure is relatively flat, promotion brings meaningful salary and prestige increments. The workload of HBO faculty is, in many cases, still more comparable to a secondary school teacher than a university docent, and the recently introduced career steps are unlikely to bring the public recognition associated with university titles very quickly.

The incentive of involvement in applied research might be considered an inducement. Most HBO faculty, however, have not been exposed to research, and would require significant training to begin activity in this area. We question whether HBOs can develop capacity to conduct research without additional staff development and/or more contacts with university research staff.

In summary, it is unclear whether the "upgraded" HBO instructorship has gained sufficient prestige and flexibility of work to compensate for the lower pay than could be obtained in private industry. This is a critical issue largely because lack of resolution may affect all other efforts to promote HBO as a high quality tertiary system.

Student recruitment

One of the inconsistencies between Dutch educational policy and practice occurs in the distribution of secondary students into the higher education system. In theory, the HBO is to be the destination of choice for the HAVO (general secondary) student, while university is the choice of the VWO (university preparatory) student. In practice, however, this distinction has little meaning.

HBOs generally prefer MBO over HAVO graduates, whom they find often ill-prepared for higher education. Unlike universities, they are currently permitted to select among applicants, and they have a marked preference for VWO graduates or HAVO students who come indirectly via supplementary MBO training. The solution to this inconsistency is not to force HBOs to accept all HAVO graduates who have passed their examination. Rather, it is appropriate to rethink the structure and content of the upper secondary system during its final years and/or introduce a "bridging option" for students who require it. As we pointed out earlier, Dutch students have invented their own bridging options within the existing secondary system. The relative efficiency of institutionalising these informal options, as opposed to creating new ones, should be considered. The goal should be to ensure that students who have the capacity and the interest in pursuing higher education have adequate preparation to succeed.

However, we question why those who pass the VWO examination should have open and unlimited access to universities, while HBO is permitted to select from among the same population. This disparity seems to give an advantage to HBO in terms of their ability to plan and to ensure higher levels of student success than is afforded to universities.

University and post-graduate education

We will only briefly summarise our view of the most important changes in universities over the last decade, as they have been amply reviewed in the Background Report and elsewhere (Teichler, 1989*b*). The main emphasis in the early part of the 1980s was on relatively intrusive government action to "correct" developments that were perceived to be too costly, or to impede other improvements. These included the introduction of the "two phase" system which reduced the expected time of undergraduate education and introduced a formal period of post-graduate training; and the cutting of departments. During this period, the higher education budget was cut severely, by 8 per cent in 1982/83 and by 4 per cent in 1986/87. Accompanying this structural reform was a change in the role definition of faculty members, formally increasing their time allocation to research. A second reform thrust, beginning in 1985, was the introduction of changes in the governance system, most clearly aimed at changing the relationship between government and university administration to conform with the "steering at a distance" model described in Chapter 3.

Four issues identified as unresolved in Teichler's (1989*a*) review have persisted to this date:

i) the open access to university and the question of the length of the first phase degree;
ii) the absence of a programme for second phase training;
iii) the increasing competition between teaching and research goals of the university; and
iv) the emerging accountability system.

Open access and degree length

The 1970 OECD review of the Dutch education system noted that a key feature of the Dutch definition of "academic freedom" was the absence of control over the institution and field that the eligible secondary student chooses, and also over the length of the time of study. The examiners concluded that this unrestricted freedom was, in practice, of questionable value: unless the guidance system improved in secondary school, they predicted that the universities would be overwhelmed. They also criticised the length of undergraduate studies, noting that "the long period of university study is likely to keep students too long away from research.." (p. 29).

The current reforms have responded to half of this concern; e.g., the time for studies has officially been reduced to four years, with a maximum of six years of subsidised study. No change has been made in the open admissions policy. We hypothesise that the team of examiners for the first review would not be wholly satisfied with current reforms, and would raise some additional questions.

First, evidence suggests that, although the length of time for first-tier studies has been reduced, it is clearly not evolving to the norm of four years. The average time to complete the degree has dropped, but is still more than five years (see the Background Report).

Some departments seem to have avoided the obligation to make choices in the curriculum, preferring to demand that students complete the same amount of work as under the old system, but in a shorter period of time. Other departments have cut laboratory experiences, thus shortening the study time, but holding students even further away from the research experiences that are necessary for either private sector work or more advanced study. The magnitude of curriculum revisions in many departments is described as limited. Although there was conformity to the requirement that a new four-year curriculum be submitted for Ministry review, few incentives for a serious reconsideration of "what the graduate should know" were offered to faculty. Financial incentives for universities to decrease the amount of time until the degree is received seem to have been an insufficient stimulus to change.

Thus, structural change (and thus some budgetary efficiency) has occurred, but in many parts of the university system there is little real reform. University representatives and employers alike complain that the new degree is of lower quality than under the old model. Whether or not this is true, it seems likely that the quality of the experience of students who rush through a largely unrevised curriculum is diminished.

The open-access question exacerbates some of these problems. Because students choose subjects freely, there is no mechanism to ensure that they are making reasonable choices from the perspective of either long-term economic or short-range academic success. We question whether students in the secondary system obtain adequate guidance to help them determine where they belong in university — or even if they belong at all. This is particularly a problem in tertiary subjects in which there is little student exposure during the VWO period. The fact that restriction of entry in some fields is made through a weighted lottery system strikes us as misguided populism: examination marks may not be the only criterion for determining who should enter, but there are surely other ways to allocate places that would permit departments to make selections so as to increase the success rates both at and after the propedeutic examination.

The current system seems to justify an enormous expenditure of human talent and resources as the practical matching process between student and discipline/department is carried out. One report suggests that in each initial entering cohort, as few as 60 per cent will end up with a *doctorandus* degree. In a tertiary system that is already more selective than truly open (such as some of the public systems in the United States), this suggests considerable inefficiency. In addition, given that it is widely believed that further cuts may be necessary, this absolute freedom of entry may not be of the highest priority. At minimum, more effective guidance mechanisms that encourage increased course-taking in VWO in relevant subjects should be considered.

The two-phase system

Our primary questions about the "two phase" system are, however, focused on the second phase, and the apparently stalled effort to design a graduate school. For example, a 1987 OECD study team found that there was considerable criticism of the decision to "fund" doctoral students through a conversion of professorial salary lines to "assistants in training" (AIOs), a position paid at 2/3 of the lowest instructor's salary, which included some teaching responsibilities.

In the early plans for the two-phase system, the old individualised supervision of post-*doctorandus* students (who normally occupied positions as junior staff members in the department) was to give way to a more formal programme and course of study before work began on the student's individual research. AIOs continue, however, to function in a poorly defined space between a junior staff member and a dependent student, and are not typically exposed to any systematic programme of studies.

Much of the problem stems from the fact that few departments have enough AIOs to warrant offering formal instruction. Current efforts to develop AIO networks between universities have promise as a means of bringing AIOs together for formal training, but if this system is to work; it will require a major change in the way professors (and students) expect to structure their time. The Netherlands is small, but not small enough to reasonably ask students in Maastricht and Utrecht to travel to each other's campuses for a single lecture on a regular basis. In order to balance the inefficiencies of travel to different sites, students and professors would have to expect to commit substantial blocks of time, e.g. a whole day, to formal study programmes, which both changes the organisation of the curriculum and people's typical patterns of time use.

There are many other possible solutions to this problem. The most radical would be to encourage or require further department mergers, so that small departments with a handful of

AIOs would be eliminated. Another only slightly less radical alternative would permit only some departments in each discipline to have AIOs. Both of these, while highly efficient, seem to us to violate the traditional preference for equality/similarity between universities. A department without AIOs would clearly function very differently (and probably with less ability to do research due to heavier teaching loads for faculty members) and have a different level of prestige. If this differentiation is to become policy, it should clearly emerge in a way that retains equivalent status between universities overall.

The solution that would be least disruptive to universities would be to reconsider the AIO position, and to define it more clearly as a training position rather than an assistant position. With closer supervision, there is little reason why a post-graduate training course that is largely modeled on the lines of an academic apprenticeship could not be effective in most disciplines. This would require increased personnel costs to maintain the same level of research, since the relative amount of independent productive research conducted by most AIOs, at least for the first year or two of their training, would decrease. The role of the professors and other possible mentors within departments would also need to change, since students would require more supervised opportunities for learning.

Irrespective of the solution — and there are certainly variants other than those discussed here — we would argue that the current static condition serves both universities, departments and studies equally poorly, and must be resolved if the quality of education is to remain high.

The balance between research and teaching

Emerging methods of assessing the quality of departments for the purposes of contingent research funding emphasize quantitative indicators of productivity, e.g. number of graduates, publications, etc. Assessments of past productivity will affect future funding. The evolving assessment system appears, however, to pay as little attention to the quality of the curriculum for undergraduate work in departments as to the quality of pedagogy. In addition, redefinition of faculty members' work load during the early 1980s reinforced the emphasis upon research at the very time when there were also demands for curriculum revisions for the new four-year *doctorandus* programme and the need to develop a second phase instructional model.

Maintaining quality instruction and investment in innovation within the undergraduate programme is absolutely critical. This will depend on a healthy research environment, but not necessarily a system of assessment based on numerical productivity. This means shifting government funding criteria to include positive incentives for improvements in curriculum and teaching, but also reconsidering some implications of the "steering at a distance" policy.

As one example, consideration might be given to permitting greater flexibility in allocating professors' efforts within departments or faculties, either across years or across individuals. As long as the overall balance between research, teaching and service is consistent with government personnel policy, does it matter if one professor prefers to spend 80 per cent of his or her time on instruction of undergraduates, while another prefers to have limited investment in teaching? Or, if a professor's interests shift, over time, from a primary interest in research to a primary interest in teaching, does that warrant the conclusion that he or she has become "unproductive"? This type of differentiated staffing policy is, in universities, typically a result of individual choices, but as the government presses universities to be more conscious of their management responsibilities, it is not unreasonable to include this type of personnel management planning within the delegated responsibilities.

The government might also play other constructive roles in promoting curriculum and teaching improvement in universities, such as developing a grants programme to fund innovative

activities of this type. (One model for such a constructive innovation policy is the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education developed by the Department of Education in the United States).

In summary, maintaining vital teaching and research functions requires the flexibility to design activities that match the unique preferences of the faculty at different points in their careers, and that a balance of emphasis in departmental review procedures be maintained. University curricula and teaching are notably difficult to change, and the current reward system emphasizes research. Thus, some government action in this area is needed if the *status quo* is to change.

Accountability

Recently introduced mechanisms for reviewing the performance of Dutch universities emphasize the importance of external peer review coupled with internal, centralised consideration of the results of external reviews in allocating of institutional resources. The peer review process is applied to programme projects submitted by departments and affects the allocation of 40 per cent of the research guilders for universities, while new internal review processes are supposed to affect the allocation of the rest of the available research money. Finally, the Ministry has not fully disengaged from assessment, as the Inspectorate's role has recently been expanded to include universities. In addition, faculty members remain accountable to Ministry standards for the allocation of their time. Thus, the system is currently adjusting to three new accountability procedures, while at least some of the older models persist.

The substitution of peer review of research productivity for Ministerial review of internal management processes is promising, both as a means of promoting quality research and for improving the productivity of the substantial R&D budget that is earmarked for universities. However, we question whether external peer review in such a small country will be able to achieve an adequately dispassionate and neutral character. Even in much larger countries, it is increasingly difficult to find peer reviewers who are both competent to judge the quality of a department or scientist's work and have no personal stake in the outcome of the review. In a country where all people in any given field are likely to have a long-term personal knowledge of the careers and the research of their peers, reputational assessment will be very difficult to avoid. In addition, there will inevitably be personal stakes in the review process (a negative review may create interpersonal friction within the scientific community, for example). Some indicated a concern that peer review in the Dutch situation would tend to reinforce "depressingly mediocre" research rather than cutting edge science.

These problems are frequently noted in other (larger) countries that make extensive use of peer review, and require vigilant sensitivity if the system is to remain "uncorrupted". We suggest, at minimum, that some consideration should be given to the universal inclusion of peer reviewers from other countries, or to combining frequently national peer review with less frequent non-Dutch reviews.

Adult education

As we first began to try and outline the issues in the adult education system in the Netherlands, we were overcome by a profound sense of confusion. It was comforting, however, to find that our confusion was mirrored by many of the Dutch participants in the system. Several key features of adult education stand out clearly, however.

First, it is a system in a period of rapid growth and change. Moreover, it is best described as a loosely linked set of partners who have little in common other than the age of the individuals they are trying to serve. Several issues emerge from these two characteristics:

i) the need for a more coherent policy to attract those who are most "in need"; and
ii) the need for clarification of the policy domain of adult education in order to prevent duplication and inefficiency.

Second, the system has a number of very strong points, in particular:

i) the broad number of "general interest" courses that are provided;
ii) the extent of employer-sponsored opportunities for upgrading and improving skills;
iii) the recent realisation (and relatively rapid action) to begin co-ordinating programmes designed to provide specific employment-related skills for unemployed or marginally employed adults.

Third, there are a number of points on which the system is weak compared to some other countries:

i) the relatively poor co-ordination between basic education and employment training;
ii) anticipatory upgrading of skills, particularly in smaller industries and firms that cannot mount internal training programmes;
iii) the development of improved access for all, and a commitment to education as a lifelong right for citizens.

The government has made it clear that adult education is a priority. The Ministry of Social Affairs has allocated Gld 1.9 billion to programmes for retraining both currently employed and unemployed individuals. The employers organisations currently allocate between Gld 4 and 6 billion for the same objectives. The problems clearly have less to do with money than with effective programme design and policy implementation, as is noted by observers from both the government and the adult education sector.

Who participates in what?

Over the past decade, adult participation in part-time education has grown erratically, but the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau reports that in 1985, nearly 18 per cent of adults (those over 16 who are not in the regular secondary system) participated in some form of educational activity. However, the meaning of adult education varies widely, depending on the group that is being served, and those who are doing the serving.

Many are students who are over 16, but under 26, who are in apprenticeships or industrial training programmes, and who in a real sense are not in adult education at all, although they are so classified. As the popularity of short vocational courses and part-time approaches to the second level of secondary education grows, this book-keeping anomaly will be likely to increase.

More than half of those enrolled are in courses that do not appear to be directly related to the individual's job or future job. A large proportion of these are enrolled in "other" types of education, e.g., private schools that the government does not recognize or keep track of. However, the number of people who participate in these systems is not well known: the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau estimated that in 1985, a total of 530 000 were enrolled in adult education including part-time secondary school students still eligible for financial support; another figure given to us by an industry representative indicates that a half a million people are enrolled in private adult education courses, and 120 000 in adult education evening courses (this figure excludes part-time programmes that operate during the day, as do many of those for students of regular school-age who are over 16).

It is not unreasonable to conclude that "real" adult education is clearly a large and growing "industry" that is dominated by the private sector, and which disproportionately serves the employed and the well educated (Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, 1989*a*: 171-2). A recent analysis of enrolment patterns in the Open University reinforces this conclusion for this new institution. The Open University was intended to be an alternative institution that would permit adults a "second chance" in obtaining higher qualifications. Yet, almost a majority of those enrolled had already completed a tertiary degree; only approximately 20 per cent are using it as a "second chance" option. In addition, most of those who enrolled are employed males, many of whom are sponsored by their employer. Women interested in retraining to enter the work force were expected to be particularly solid candidates for the Open University, yet comprise a small proportion. Most of the women who enroll are seeking intellectual stimulation, not employment.

Government-sponsored adult basic education is often seen as a direct tool to reduce unemployment and increase the number of workers available in areas where there are more jobs than qualified workers. However, as the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (1989*a*) notes, the resources allocated for these purposes "are limited... when compared either with the total budget for adult education or with the large numbers whose position on the labour market is vulnerable" (p. 175). In addition, those who are most in need of educational job-related support are least likely to participate.

A recent study found that 600 000 native Dutch adults are functionally illiterate. Basic education for this population, plus non-Dutch speaking immigrants, is expanding, but the expansion has, according to some, raised serious problems of delivery. These include co-ordination difficulties between the Ministries of Education and Science, and Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, both of whom contribute money, problems of applying civil service regulations and standards to a field which very recently consisted largely of volunteers; and requirements for co-ordination with regional planning boards. The latter two issues are viewed as problematic because they limit the flexibility of basic education programmes to reach and serve individuals who are, by definition, harder to locate and motivate than most. Unlike the general tendency for increased self-management, this fledgling system feels overwhelmed by the mixed blessing of becoming part of the formal bureaucracy.

In summary, there is ample evidence to suggest that adult education is serving very different needs in the Netherlands from those that would be identified as most important by many — e.g., improving the life chances of individuals who lack the skills and knowledge to become active members of society. In addition, despite the emphasis of political parties on the need to better articulate the educational sector with the needs of the job market, this articulation does not seem to be entirely effective in the adult education sector. What is needed is the development of a comprehensive policy that identifies the range of adult education activities that benefit both individuals and societies, and which provides non-bureaucratic mechanisms for co-ordination that will stimulate participation and encourage between-sector programme development.

Issues in defining and organising adult education

There is no reason to prefer a system that is more organised and centralised, in which the nature of adult education would be clearly defined and participants could be easily counted. In fact, given that so much of adult education is designed on a complete market system — to offer courses that people want at relatively low prices — some looseness in structures certification and definitions is necessary. However, it was pointed out to us that, in the current system, there may a lot of duplication and confusion of roles, which does present difficulties for the consumer. For

example, students may enroll in private programmes under the assumption that they will be making progress on a degree, only later to find out that they are not. Determining which courses and which institutions are eligible for subsidies is also an area of confusion for the consumer.

The government also has an interest in preventing duplication: in a period of fiscal austerity it makes no sense, for example, to develop an adult education programme in "Conversational French for Your Vacation" or "Advanced Word Processing" in an MBO, where a commercial institution with the appropriate equipment and instructors is a few blocks away. The "commercially private" schools are, not surprisingly, concerned that the government-subsidised education system is trying to compete with them for industry-sponsored training courses by encouraging HBOs and MBOs to serve the private market in short-term training, as well as degree-related courses.

The relationship between the secondary system, the higher vocational education system and the adult education system is very unclear. It is acknowledged that the secondary/tertiary educational sectors must clearly be involved in delivering adult education, but under what circumstances and how is very unclear, particularly given the lack of a definitive policy statement from the new government. (The previous coalition supported a policy of entrepreneurship in this regard. Secondary/tertiary institutions were to make themselves attractive as settings for adult education programmes.)

In summary, adult education requires in-depth policy development, both to better understand what currently exists, and to look for gaps, duplications, and inefficiencies that can be corrected. Rapid implementation of plans for improvement co-ordination of public and private sector programmes emphasising employment training is of particular priority, as is the development of plans for improving access.

Public-private partnerships

Traditionally, the Netherlands has relied exclusively on the national budget to fund all phases of education. In the past few years, however, there have been efforts to change this condition in a variety of ways.

First, there is an effort to shift part of the burden of educational expenses to the individual. Under the previous government, modest student fees for 16-18 year olds were introduced. In higher education, the intended shift is more dramatic. The proportion of costs of supporting students in higher education that is covered by loans rather than grants has increased.

Second, in no part of the system has the previous government's aspiration to involve business as an active social partner in education been more pronounced than in the universities, HBOs and adult education. The government's plan for expanding higher education was based, in part, on the assumption that firms would pay to support students who were, or would become, employees after completing their work. In HBOs, the plan to encourage closer ties to industry involved encouraging them to offer specific training programmes, and to begin to solicit interest in joint applied research. There are also proposals to shift the loan structure to commercial banks.

Third, we have already pointed to the substantial investment by industry in adult education, and the hopes of the government for joint planning that will maximise the impact of private and public funding.

These initiatives are not dramatic in terms of shifting the balance of responsibility. However, at the present time they are clearly general aspirations rather than policies with specific aims and plans for implementation. It should be emphasized that, in part because of the sketchy outline

of the nature and/or degree of intended shifts, representatives from industry remain skeptical about their new "social responsibilities". As one executive pointed out, there has been no proposal to adjust the business tax rate to take account of private sector investments in the public educational system. Finally, the Committee on Education and the Labour Market will fully consider how or whether to renegotiate all areas of co-operative development of higher education and training.

Chapter 6

EQUITY ISSUES

The Dutch, with their long history of collective responsibility for the welfare of all citizens, take equity issues seriously. Much thought and effort is addressed to both research and discussion about equity questions. For example, the National Foundation for Educational Research (SVO) has one of its 15 programme areas addressed to women's equity issues, while another focuses on special education. There is no special programme for research on racial and social class equity issues, but a perusal of funded research reveals that it is often a prominent topic. No society, however, has found a perfect answer to questions about how to promote equity in education, and the Background report raises three areas that are of special concern: gender equity, lingual and racial minority issues, and students with learning differences and/or behavioral disorders. In this chapter, we will deal in greatest detail with women, minorities and special education. Social class inequity is no less important, in our view, but many of the policies that would ameliorate the association between educational attainment and social class are similar to those that could be initiated to improve the situation of minorities.

Women

Dutch society is characterised by a cultural emphasis on the equality of women. Recent social histories of the "Golden Age" of the Netherlands (17th century) demonstrates that, during a period when the position of women in most countries was both sexually and economically subservient, the Dutch emphasized the equal (albeit distinguishable) status of men and women (Schama, 1987). Recent cultural studies indicate that the Dutch, along with the Scandinavian countries, exhibit gender-based few differences in work-related values. Furthermore, the Dutch attachment to cross-gender family-centered activities is legendary in the European Community.

In this context, it seems somewhat incongruent that, among developed countries, Dutch women are also among the least likely to be employed, and if employed among the least likely to hold managerial or professional positions. In addition, their educational opportunities are traditionally limited to "women's subjects" (e.g. the caring professions, and primary education). Until very recently, a substantial number of women attended terminal lower vocational courses in domestic science, and took low paying jobs only until marriage.

This has been viewed as a problem by many Dutch citizens, and efforts at change are apparent. (We note that some religious groups criticise these efforts, due to their Biblical interpretation of gender roles. Nevertheless, the general consensus that women should be accorded equal opportunities for participation in all aspects of social life is not inconsistent with the preference

of some groups to maintain, by choice, more traditional gender-specific roles. In our view, no current or proposed educational policies unduly pressure individual women to choose non-traditional paths.) The National Curriculum Development and Testing Institutions (SLO and CITO) have directed considerable attention to the development of gender unbiased programmes. SLO has, in particular, developed alternative curricula in math and science that are addressed to the known "learning style" differences between girls and boys. In addition, emphasis has been placed on the need for the schools' work plan to address questions of equity. Many references were heard during our visit to the "*Kies Exact*" (Choose Science and Math) publicity programme, which was shown to have stimulated more girls to choose these subjects in secondary school. The recent requirement that applicants for teacher training programmes have taken a final examination subject in mathematics represents a somewhat more indirect approach to this problem, since the main goal is to improve primary education. (We are concerned that this provision may conflict with the need to attract many talented teachers in the next decade. Some consideration should be given, if the current discussions about certifying primary teachers specifically for either the early or later grades move forward, to requiring less maths for those who will teach levels K through 3.) A new course for women in management has been initiated, to encourage women to opt for business roles other than secretarial.

Much success has been made in retaining women students beyond the obligatory school age, and although there are still differences, they are not great. But if we look at the interior of the educational process, the results are not so optimistic. The most recent investigations of the Inspectorate (MOW, 1989*b*) suggest that women are still avoiding sciences and math, and that even within the same courses they are less likely to use computers in their own work, or to take initiative in classroom discussions and exercise leadership in other school contexts.

Differences at the tertiary level are more pronounced. For example, in 1983, the Dutch were among the European countries with the highest per centage of the population participating in higher education, but women not only constituted a smaller per centage of the higher education population than any other country besides the United Kingdom (where the overall per centage was also much lower than the Netherlands), but their concentration in traditional "women's subjects" was also greater. For example, 1/7 of the students taking biological sciences and less than 1/3 of the students in economics in the Netherlands were women, as compared with 1/3 and nearly 1/2 in Belgium (MOW, 1989).

Although we understand the government's dissatisfaction with the rate of change, we do not see many opportunities for entirely new initiatives in education, given the structure of free individual choice at all levels. Additional active curriculum efforts are important, as are in-service training programmes to create self-awareness of behaviour on the part of science and math teachers that may discourage girls from staying in these subjects beyond the necessary courses. Training in assertiveness for girls would also be useful, given the recent findings of the Inspectorate with regard to school behaviour. It seems likely that personalised guidance for girls might be more influential over the long run than public campaigns, such as "*Kies Exact*". However, given the constitutional necessity to give room within such programmes for the values of individual private schools, public education efforts are still important.

There is only one area in which we are concerned about current policies regarding emancipation: tuition support policies for older women. As an example, the support policies for tuition at the Open University require consideration of the income of the entire household, which usually means that of the husband. If findings from other countries may be related to the Dutch context, the choice of a "selfish investment" (a university course for one member of the family) over one which benefits all members (a nicer vacation) is often difficult to make in middle income families. We would thus encourage assessment of individual rather than household income, and

a more compensatory approach to education funding for married women who have not attended higher education. Without such a policy, it will take several generations to change the composition of the labour force in significant ways.

Minorities and non-Dutch speaking residents

Policy evolution

Dutch policy on how to deal with ethnic minorities and immigrants have, over the past 15 years, been among the most vigorous and constructive in Western Europe. It has also evolved in very different directions during the recent past.

Like in most countries, immigrants from "third world" or poorer European countries were initially regarded as *gastarbeider*, or temporary residents who would, in the near future, return to their country of origin. Moreover, in former colonial powers large per centages of the immigrant population have their origin in former dependencies. Today, however, one pupil in three in many cities in Western Europe is of foreign parentage, and most of these students were born in the host country. Although the absolute per centage of foreign students in Dutch schools is smaller than in most countries, the relative rate of increase has been particularly high since the late 1970s (Glenn, 1989).

The initial educational policy for immigrant children was largely what might be called "supportive segregation" and focused on the need for children to maintain their mother language and culture. Separate schools and/or classrooms were thus accepted. A second stage in policy development was a shift towards recognising that most immigrant children would stay in the Netherlands for most, if not all of their lives, and that the development of a multi-cultural society was inevitable. Thus, a policy of assimilation, or the rapid integration of non-Dutch speaking children into regular Dutch schools was adopted in the mid-1970s, well before many other countries.

Under these conditions, the primary mechanism for specific support of lingual minorities was the immersion of non-Dutch speaking elementary school children into regular school classes, coupled with "linking classes" for children whose linguistic skills do not adequately prepare them for secondary school. Evaluations of these "linking classes" was extremely negative, finding that few children actually made a successful transition to regular school classes. These studies also indicated that immigrant children from Morocco and Turkey were at greatest risk of educational failure. The greatest criticism was placed on the inadequate preparation of "linking class" teachers in the native languages of the students, and the tendency to but the entire burden of assimilation on a single classroom, requiring no adaptation at all in the regular school.

Bilingualism, implemented through pull-out instruction in mother-tongue languages during the regular school day was a major policy option in the late 1970s and 1980s, but came under heavy criticism by socialist politicians for achieving neither the goal of cultural preservation (too brief to teach real fluency) nor of assimilation (preventing children from essential classroom instruction in other subjects). Putting these additional classes at the end of the day, as has become more common, has also been criticised as burdensome for the children, and isolating for the teachers. Nevertheless, supplementary language instruction has increased enormously, but is provided primarily to Turkish and Moroccan children, as opposed to other populations (Chinese, Surinamese) who are considered to be less educationally vulnerable. The resolving the in-school versus after school problem is made more difficult by a racial difference in preferences: immigrant parents from European countries prefer after school instruction at a central location, while those from Turkey and Morocco prefer in-school instruction (Glenn, 1989).

In summary, although the Dutch government espouses the idea of supporting mother-tongue instruction, while emphasizing the need to fully integrate into Dutch education, it has not yet found a satisfactory way of doing so. Current policy emphasizes the need to integrate mother-tongue instruction into the educational goals of the school, and de-emphasizes cultural preservation goals.

The educational priority policy

In addition to the issue of cultural assimilation versus segregation, the Dutch government faces the broader question of how to deal with the social class differences in educational achievement. This is of importance because research suggests that many of the educational problems of minorities are attributable more to their socio-economic status than their linguistic deficiencies and cultural differences.

The educational priorities policies of the Netherlands are designed to provide additional assistance, usually in the form of staff positions, to schools and areas that serve particularly large numbers of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. These include native Dutch students from low-income families, and students from non-Dutch speaking backgrounds and/or ethnic minorities.

The priorities policy has not been evaluated as very successful. In our view, this is probably a result of the fact that the additional resources are almost always allocated to the provision of additional regular classroom teachers. Thus, the socio-economically disadvantaged child is taught in a slightly smaller group — but this difference is not large enough to realise the beneficial results of small group instruction (which usually are not measurable until classroom sizes fall to approximately 15). The instruction and curriculum is typically the same as would be found in other schools.

Racial segregation: the emerging problem

The educational issues are not, however, exclusively contained in either the lingual policy or the "social class problem". Current educational policies must also confront the increasing racial segregation of non-Dutch from Dutch children. This is particularly critical given the research finding cited in the Background Report that indicates that minority students in segregated classrooms perform more poorly than those in more integrated classrooms.

While the phenomenon of "white flight" from inner-city schools with increasing numbers of immigrant children has occurred in most countries, the rate of recent segregation is very rapid in the Netherlands because of the policy of open school choice based on article 23 of the Constitution. One principal from an elementary school in den Haag reports, for example, that her school went from roughly 50 per cent non-Dutch to virtually 100 per cent non-Dutch in only three years. Segregation undermines the policy of assimilation, since putting immigrant children directly into a class with Dutch children is not possible where there are no Dutch with whom to integrate. This volatility could not occur if educational attendance areas were more clearly linked to residence, since finding another home is clearly a more major choice than finding another school that is accessible by public transportation.

This presents the Dutch with a critical policy dilemma, because the policy designed to guarantee freedom of choice is being used by Dutch parents to desert "black schools", which conflicts with the equally strongly held but non-constitutional commitment to open social and educational opportunities for all. However, we noted during our interviews a dominant preference to avoid serious discussion of this conflict by simply asserting that "there is nothing we can do under the Constitution".

These challenges are increased by the bind in which private, religiously affiliated schools find themselves. If they do not accept immigrant children because they cannot fully support the religious education programmes in the school they will be accused of becoming "white havens" in a period of increasing social polarization. If, as many have decided, they will actively contribute to the assimilation policy by accepting non-white children of different faiths, they run into considerable political opposition from the public school umbrella organisation, which argues that this unfairly protects private schools from the real consequences of a declining student population, and represents an indirect additional public subsidy of religious education. Some argued that the religious private schools were accepting immigrant children only for the purpose of maintaining enrolments, and that if the demographic patterns change, so would their admissions policies. However, we observed no evidence to support this argument, and cannot imagine a design of a policy solution to the increasing problem of educational segregation that ignored the 70 per cent of the schools that are private.

The question of possible negative effects of Article 23 on the development of an integrated multi-cultural society are exacerbated by the increasing trend for Muslim immigrants to demand schools of their own; schools that will focus not only on non-Christian religious values (protected under the Constitution), but will also support cultural values that are in direct conflict with the dominant society (for example, the segregation of girls and boys after the onset of puberty). Again, this puts the authorities in a difficult dilemma between fully supporting the desired freedom of religious choice of school and fully supporting the policy of integration.

For minority parents, the problem of increasing segregation is worsened by the virtual absence of minority teachers in the Dutch school system. Few teaching jobs are available, but even if they were there has been little active effort to encourage minorities to enter pre-service teacher training programmes.

Since the number of immigrant/minority children is small, and is concentrated almost exclusively in the large cities of the Randstad (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht) and of "old" industrial areas, the issue of segregating schools is easy to avoid for most educators and politicians. The municipal authorities, however, *must* wrestle with the problem.

Some alternatives

While the emphasis on developing constructive policies for minority education are laudable, we believe that much could be learned from the experiences of other multi-cultural societies, particularly Canada and the United States. Based on these country's experiences, we would suggest further exploration of a number of possibilities.

First, more focus needs to be developed in using the "priority policy" budget. Those funds that are available should be concentrated in the schools and regions that have the highest needs.

Second, more emphasis needs to be placed on involvement with families during the preschool period. Earlier intervention is a critical component of creating supportive home environments, and of preventing many of the problems that appear in early primary school.

Third, more attention needs to be paid to increasing the number of personnel in the schools from the minority cultures. Guidance teachers and teacher aides would be an easy place to start, since obtaining more qualified teaching staff is a very long-range project.

Fourth, the government should consider developing alternative schools for minority children who have repeated failures or effectively drop out in their early teens. These alternative schools should use some of the structures that are effective in adult basic education (combining school work and job-related practical activities) but should have more personal guidance available.

Fifth, the government should consider a policy of promoting smaller schools, or schools-within-schools for children who are at-risk of failing in the school system, particularly at the junior secondary level. Research suggests that small schools, where students and staff know each other very well, have environments that are more likely to improve retention.

Finally, the government should try to promote voluntary integration efforts which involve both private and public schools. The problem of increasing racial segregation cannot be solved in the public urban school system alone, but broader efforts will not occur unless this is seen as an issue that creates a moral imperative.

Special needs students

The Background Report suggests that the Netherlands is faced with an increasing number of children in the schools designated for special needs children. The increase is almost exclusively due to referral of children with learning difficulties and social adjustment problems. The special needs population of students with various physical and medical handicaps is relatively stable. This increase causes concern on both the social and economic dimensions of educational policy.

Social concerns

In interviews, many claimed that the increase has resulted from a dramatically changed attitude on the part of parents to special education. In previous decades, special education was viewed as a stigma, but many parents are now supporting referrals to special education. We have no way of judging this claim, although it reflects similar impressions from other countries, and may be related to the research finding that many parents are themselves subject to social and personal dislocations that make them less able to cope with their children's problems than in the past (Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, 1989, p. 158).

The special education population is disproportionately made up of boys and immigrant children. The degree to which referral to special schools reflect "normal behaviour" of young boys and culturally different and/or socio-economically disadvantaged children that teachers are not equipped to handle is of increasing concern. Dutch teachers do not typically receive any pre-service training on how to teach special needs children or cultural minorities during their pre-service training. Unless a teacher-in-training happens to be assigned to an urban school for clinical experiences, he or she will have little exposure to lower class and immigrant children in today's schools. There are few intensive in-service programmes that can remediate this problem: in-service has been provided by staff at the primary teacher training colleges (PABOs), almost all of whom also lack experience in special needs and multi-cultural education. In addition, few schools employ specialists in special education among their staff.

It is hardly surprising then, that school-based educators view the government's demand to accommodate more learning disabled and behaviorally disruptive children in their classrooms as an unreasonable request. Indirect policies to diminish the number of students, such as the recent effort to cap the number of faculty in special schools, are viewed as particularly insensitive.

Integrating special needs children who are not severely emotionally or academically disabled into regular classrooms may have desirable social consequences without necessarily diminishing the quality of education for regular students. We would include in this statement support for increased integration of physically handicapped children where at all possible. However, it is important to emphasise that a mainstreaming policy is not necessarily less costly than a policy of separate schools, at least if one is to take the need to provide supplementary services seriously.

Countries such as the United States that have mainstreamed programmes have school-based staff members who provide these services to all except the least disabled students, or in smaller, rural schools they may be provided by a regional center. In either case, the cost of additional buildings may be smaller than in a separate system, but the use of personnel is likely to be less efficient.

Economic concerns

A more important issue is that per-pupil costs in special education have skyrocketed during a period of cost-containment in which per pupil expenses in other sectors remained flat, or rose only slightly. The Background Report offers no explanation for this increase. However, it seems very likely that the application of "standard" educational policies to special education are the likely cause.

Most special schools are limited to one class of disability. Furthermore, they, like other schools, must reflect the freedom of parents to choose their preferred educational pillar. Finally, since the increase in special schools is largely at the primary school level, the norm of easy access also prevails. Voluntary mergers therefore become virtually impossible. If the economic costs of running small primary schools are a serious issue, the economics of special education should be of even greater concern. The degree to which these costs are due to pillarisation is, in our view, a topic that needs to be openly addressed. The Dutch population has clearly concluded that preserving small schools and freedom of choice are worth the financial cost, but the degree to which the education of all regular students may suffer as a consequence of the maintenance of small schools for a small population of students has not been openly discussed to our knowledge.

Reallocating minimally learning disabled students to regular schools might resolve this problem to some extent. This approach is conscionable only if each school could acquire both active and sustained in-service training for regular teachers, and specially trained personnel to provide supplementary services to children who need more individualized attention than can reasonably be provided by teachers or other students without jeopardizing the rest of the class. The new coalition agreement earmarks Gld 70 million to support more integration of special education children into the primary school. The details of this effort are, however, not yet worked out. The experience of over a decade with a similar policy in the United States suggests that the implementation will not be simple, and the costs are likely to far exceed the initial allocation. In our view the government will eventually confront the need to ask the public to make a choice either between easy access, or freedom of education (as it is traditionally defined) if special education costs are to be contained.

Age discrimination

During the period of level funding and financial cutbacks over the past decade and a half, older professionals in some educational sectors have been encouraged to retire early in order to reduce expenditures and to create job opportunities for incoming younger teachers, administrators and professors/researchers. This strategy is in line with that used in many other countries.

While providing the opportunity for older professionals to retire with dignity if they choose to do so is a humane and desirable policy, we are concerned about the possibilities of pressure on "older" individuals to leave the profession early. Research has been unable to prove that older professional employees are uniformly less productive, or even less adaptive than those who are younger. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that, on average, older teachers and

professors may be more productive than those who are beginning their careers, and that the individual propensity to be innovative and effective is well established by early middle age. Current policies that permit teachers to disengage gradually through part-time work represent sound solutions that we strongly endorse.

Policies that strongly encourage early retirement may be inequitable for a longer-term reason as well. The current economic benefits of very early retirement may be more than outweighed by the debits of a needed radical shift in policy as the productive work force declines due to predicted demographic changes. Any current inequities will seem small compared to a future scenario in which people may be actively discouraged (or prevented) from retiring until 70 or later in order to maintain a sufficient number of employed persons in the economy to support those who were previously pensioned at 55.

Chapter 7

PERSPECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

In this chapter we return to issues raised in the previous chapters, and pose related questions that we believe the new government should address as it modifies existing policies and develops new ones. We will not summarise the discussion of the previous chapters extensively, but will note the major problems or controversies that lead us to identify these issues and questions.

Policy design and system results

Recent policy aims and their implementation

The Netherlands belongs among those societies in which constructive educational policies are aimed most pointedly at innovation and improvement. Unlike many other countries, policy-makers have not been content to revise the curriculum every decade and assume that good teaching and learning will follow. One recently developed instrument for achieving that aim was the "steering at a distance" model discussed in Chapter 3, which was assumed to be a prerequisite for increased innovation in schools and institutions of higher education.

Policy changes during most of the last decade were framed by the need to cut the national educational budget, or at least keep increases within bounds. Educational policy was not, however, driven by blind faith in the inherent virtue of budget reductions, efficiency and accountability. Rather, it was guided by a belief in the potency of locally initiated renewal and improvement, and the conviction that the dominant educational aspirations of the Dutch population would be well served by a change in steering policy. The previously noted concern for educational quality also entered in, as did the conviction that it was time to reconsider the established assumption that the national government should shoulder full responsibility for funding all components of the education system. In summary, the issue being debated was whether the government should continue to determine in a detailed way policies governing the financial, personnel and time-allocation aspects of schools, a system that was perceived to provide few incentives for schools to optimise their operations.

We support the previous and current governments' effort to raise fundamental issues about system governance, and all of the considerations raised in this chapter should be interpreted in this context. Nevertheless, many aspects of the new steering policy remain to be worked out. In our view, this is the right moment to examine the way in which this policy (which, to date, is partially implemented only in higher education) is evolving, and the ways in which it has affected or will affect education.

Concerns have been raised about the mixed signals that are being sent as the implementation of this policy proceeds. Some of these represent fears rather than facts, and in other cases we are not able to judge the validity of assertions. Nevertheless, the following issues should be taken seriously.

First, it is argued that management changes and new modes of target-setting and assessment are being implemented (in the case of higher education) or are being extensively discussed (in the case of elementary and secondary education) before existing administrative regulations have been loosened. The consequence has been a perception in many educational sectors that the total level of regulation will increase. Although we cannot comment whether this will actually be the case, in general, the degree of relative autonomy that will be realised is perceived to have been oversold.

Second, the government underestimated the cumulative burden of several policies, for example the combination of mergers, which consume enormous staff energy and often take a decade to become a reality, and cutbacks in expenses.

Third, the combination of promised autonomy coupled with new and somewhat controversial forms of assessment and assessment indicators creates apprehension about whether new forms of control would more than offset new freedoms.

Fourth, while all citizens are in favour of improved quality of education, there is little consensus about what this means and therefore little opportunity to develop coherent policies. Similarly, both educators and the business partners have expressed some concerns about the still unclear quality of emerging policies on cost-sharing.

Thus, questions to raise about the evolving policy include:

- *Do the specific educational sectors require different rationales and modes for "steering at a distance"? What are these differences, if any?*
- *Under what conditions is it realistic to expect that the private sector will invest in graduate education and research in higher education, or earmark funds specifically for the development of capacities for improved training and retraining in the vocational education sector?*
- *Under what conditions will the government really be willing to loosen its long-established regulatory and supervisory control? What types of control will be decentralised other than some budgetary autonomy?*
- *What is the relationship between autonomy and accountability? For example, if a school or institution of higher education is doing poorly, either fiscally or in terms of student outcomes, will the government maintain a "steering at a distance" policy?*
- *How will the government protect against the possibility that loosening central ministry controls will result in the vacuum being filled by efforts to control education emerging at other levels (proposed regional manpower councils, increasing influence from pillars, etc.)*
- *Under what conditions will school-based educators be willing to accept more freedom coupled with greater accountability? How can the government gain support on the part of teachers and headmasters, without which effective changes in steering will be impossible?*
- *How will the government avoid the possibility that output controls will restrict the freedom of enacting alternative curricula?*
- *How will the government know the impacts of its changed steering policy? In other words, how will the policy be assessed, and when?*

The need for a period of rest

The education system does not work if rules change every day. Both schools and institutions of higher education in the Netherlands have been exposed to a variety of substantial changes and anticipated changes, including the integration of pre-school and primary education, institutional mergers at all levels, a growing heterogeneity in the student body, the initiation of new curricular approaches and subjects, new mechanisms for allocating funding, and the expectation that they will take an increasing role in institutional management in addition to reductions in funding.

A common characteristic of most of these changes in policy is that they depend on negative stimulation rather than the promise of additional resources or other rewards. In many cultures, the imposition of so many negative inducements might well have brought change to a standstill. In the Netherlands it has at least produced a very unhappy mood in most of the institutions affected.

The burden of adjusting to changes has been increased by a number of additional factors, including the worsening of the position of teachers in terms of salary and perceived public support. In addition there is increasing uncertainty that emerges, on the one hand, from continuous and unstable changes in educational policies and regulations in some areas, and, on the other, from the inability to reach a decision about lower secondary education.

In our view, a period of rest is needed during which the major regulatory and structural changes that have already occurred, and those on which there is already a social consensus, can be consolidated. Only with time to work through these changes can schools and institutions of higher education generate the internal energies to create their own innovative programmes. The goal of increasing the institutional management capacities of educational institutions, which is essential to the change in steering policy, is difficult or perhaps impossible, to achieve in an environment that is perceived as so unstable. Therefore:

— *Will the government create a "social contract," including consultation with political parties that are not members of the current coalition, to secure a period of relative stability in the education system for a minimum of five years? This might require government leadership in the following areas:*

- *Rapid implementation of those changes that are considered to be prerequisites to a change in governance; e.g. immediate passage of the basic education bill as well as basic structural and curricular changes in upper secondary education;*
- *Reduction of continued negative pressures for mergers, substituting positive incentives and/or making mergers voluntary;*
- *Willingness to permit schools and institutions of higher education to work out their own approaches for meeting social expectations;*
- *Changing the tone of the public discussions about education: a search for educational institutions and practices that work well, instead of emphasizing only weaknesses.*

The need for support

We noted earlier that the decision-making process in the Netherlands usually results in consensus about the need for major educational policy changes. However, the translation of a new policy into school or classroom practice is a difficult task even when there is a high degree of willingness. Research in the Netherlands and other countries has shown that schools — even good schools — cannot carry out all of the demands placed on them without support during the implementation of demanding new programmes of change.

Although the Netherlands has a well-funded and elaborate system of support institutions, their work is not always co-ordinated in ways that maximise their ability to help schools. In particular, we are concerned about the availability of long-term, carefully designed in-service professional development programmes for both teachers and school leaders, that can realistically increase the skills and the certainty of primary and secondary schools to cope with the new social demands. In addition, we are concerned that some priority areas are not receiving adequate support.

- *Will the government continue the policy of reallocating resources and decision-making authority to schools so that they may choose their own staff development activities?*
- *Will the government attempt to resolve some of the existing real and perceived constraints on co-ordination between support institutions prior to the parliamentary re-authorisation of the support system in 1995?*
- *Will the government review the delivery of services to different sectors to ensure a better distribution to all, including the vocational system?*
- *Will the government provide financial resources to reinforce and develop improved institutional management and self-determined innovation?*

Quality and assessment in primary and secondary education: A multi-level approach

We proposed several scenarios for the resolution of current controversies concerning the assessment of the performance of the primary and secondary education system, and the development of attainment and institutional output indicators that were discussed in Chapter 3. As was pointed out, each of these scenarios (in addition to other alternatives that may be developed) meets different assessment objectives: there is no system that can meet all of them. Thus, the questions for the government are:

- *What are the government's aims in assessing educational quality?*
- *Who will control the process of assessment?*
- *What system of assessment of primary and secondary education will be proposed, and how will it address the aims?*
- *What financial resources, support, and training will be allocated to ensure that assessment results will be usable at the school level?*
- *How will the government ensure that the promised autonomy will accompany the imposition of a more elaborate and possibly more uniform assessment system?*

Innovation

Although we call for a period of rest for most schools, we do not imply that all centrally-stimulated innovation in primary/secondary education should stop. Three areas are of priority and require new programme initiatives:

i) increasing the flexibility of the upper general secondary schools (HAVO), which have been relatively insulated from the changes affecting most schools;

ii) improvements in the work life of teachers, including some changes in teacher education; and

iii) increasing programmes to deal with the educational integration of minorities and the promotion of equal educational opportunities for socially disadvantaged youth. In addition, innovative efforts already planned or underway in other areas should be vigorously

maintained. These include: basic education; renewal and quality improvement in middle level vocational education; equality of educational opportunity. In these questions we will focus on the need for new initiatives.

Flexibility in upper secondary school

We are impressed with the degree to which Dutch students have figured out alternative ways of moving through the highly differentiated system of upper secondary schools in order to maximise their access to their preferred form of post-secondary education and/or employment. The pattern of switching streams is so common that a relatively large proportion of the students do not graduate from the programme in which they started. Nevertheless, the fact that they find it necessary to create these complicated routes suggests that it is time for a change in upper secondary education.

Conditions affecting the last years of general secondary education are fluid and are likely to become more so. Existing sources of change include institutional mergers, the increasing demands from the tertiary sector (most notably from the HBO consolidation) and other parts of the secondary system (the extension and development of vocational education options). Future implementation of the basic education curriculum and attainment targets in lower secondary will also change the operating conditions for upper secondary schools. These turbulent conditions suggest a number of future tensions.

First, the ambiguity of the dividing lines between the types of secondary institutions will increase as they come to be housed in the same physical plant, or become part of an institutional merger of schools of diverse types. Reasonable flexibility of personnel policies, for example, will create pressure towards defining teachers as members of the school rather than members of a particular stream.

Second, student transfers between streams are likely to increase. This will create pressure for more diverse transfer options, and bridging elements to facilitate them.

Third, tension in the relationship between secondary general (HAVO) schools, and the tertiary vocational system (HBO) will grow. This will create pressure to alter either the HAVO or the HBO curriculum.

Finally, the perceived mismatch between the quality of VWO and HAVO graduates and the demands of higher education will not abate. Given the social commitment to freedom of access of qualified students to higher education, we anticipate that problems associated with student choice may increase further. For example, pressure from universities and higher vocational education to improve the quality of pre-university (VWO) and general education (HAVO) students may result in requirements that students pursue more subjects in secondary education if they wish to be eligible for the propedeutic phase in higher education. Or, the propedeutic phase will take on an increasingly compensatory character, requiring youths to spend a longer period in pre-career education.

The Committee on Education and the Labour Market will address some of these tensions. However, more direction to the Committee based on a working out of the following questions might facilitate their deliberations:

— *Will the government accept the implicit demand for more flexible educational options, and develop constructive policies encouraging different mixes of programmes, transfer and bridging strategies, which would include more flexible mixes of general secondary and vocational education?*

- *Can a system that is both equitable and of high quality be achieved without an increasing emphasis on qualified student guidance? How can guidance be provided so that it is easily accessible, yet avoids the increasing pressures on schools to attract and retain students, an inevitable consequence of declining enrolment?*
- *Does the tertiary system's demand for "better prepared students" reflect a problem of curriculum and content in the upper secondary system, of inadequate diversification and bridging in the propedeutic phase, or other problems of articulation between levels?*
- *Would the identified weaknesses in HAVO education be solved if 4th or 5th year students were required to make a choice for either VWO or MBO? What other solutions would improve the performance of this "weak link" track?*

Improving the role of teachers

Although the complexity of educational innovations in the Netherlands has almost overwhelmed the system, we advocate an additional change of direction with a simple proposition: improving the capacity of schools to manage themselves institutionally demands a new model of the teachers' role as well as in the role of the school leader.

A changing model of the tasks and careers of teachers is an inevitable consequence of increased demands on the school and the frustration of teachers regarding their work and career conditions. Change in teacher roles seems particularly appropriate, since institutional management requires a redefinition of the role of school leaders. In particular, we emphasized earlier that, at minimum, teachers need greater variety in their work, more time to work together on school development tasks, and increased opportunities for professional development both inside and outside school. These activities should be viewed as part of the teachers' job, not as "extras", always to be carried out on weekends and evenings. In addition, beginning teachers need to earn a salary that matches that of other similarly trained civil servants.

Changing teachers' role in schools will be increasingly difficult if the reliance on highly specialised certification and part-time teachers continues. At the very least, co-ordination of common work and professional development is difficult; at worst the sense of investment and commitment in the school declines when many teachers are in the school only erratically.

Our questions for the government are:

- *Will the government advocate raising the salaries of beginning teachers in order to attract better graduates from secondary and higher education?*
- *Will the government work with teacher unions to develop national personnel regulations that increase the flexibility of schools to design appropriate personnel policies, while still protecting teachers from arbitrary action at the local level?*
- *Will the government make the need to reform the role and working conditions of teachers a priority? In particular:*
  - *Will the Dutch people be willing to financially support increased quality of working conditions for adults in schools, as contrasted to the children whom they serve?*
  - *Will the government develop a coherent policy to support professional development and renewal that takes into account the need for individual renewal and collaborative work at the school level?*
  - *What policies will the government develop to encourage (or make it possible) the support system to give priority to the improvement of teachers' work?*

Improvements in teacher training

There seems to be widespread consensus in the Netherlands that additional consideration needs to be given to the teacher training system if the supply of good teachers is to be maintained. Some have focused on the qualifications of entering students. Before it is possible to attract the best students, however, it is important that the institutions are fully prepared to provide them with coherent and stimulating experiences.

There also seems to be a consensus that the recent consolidation of higher vocational education, which incorporated most of the independent secondary school training institutions, and many of the primary teacher training institutions, has not produced a solution to the problem of institutional capacity. As noted in Chapter 4, teacher training programmes are often isolated both within the HBOs and in relation to schools and research; and severe decreases in size have diminished their capacity to cover all needed subjects, particularly new issues such as teaching in multi-cultural classrooms, managing student behaviour problems, and guidance.

Finally, we observe that the complexity of the teacher training and certification system, at least for secondary schools, mirrors the complexity of the school system itself. This variety creates considerable inflexibility in making the best use of personnel. Thus, we ask:

- *Does the government share this assessment of concerns about the ability of teacher training institutions, particularly very small ones, to provide the full range of pre-service and in-service experiences needed for 21st century teachers?*
- *What policies will be proposed to develop improved teacher training capacities in the current institutions?*
- *Will alternative training and/or certification routes be advocated by the government to meet pressing needs in the near future?*

The management of the school

While effective schools require good teacher leadership, the role of school leaders and school boards in Dutch education also requires some additional rethinking. We did not see a clear model of what good institutional management at the school level would look like. We were somewhat surprised to find that, despite the centrality of increased institutional management capacity to the previous and current coalition policies, little consideration has been given to how it is to be achieved.

One point that should be addressed is that the role of a school leader will not be identical in all Dutch schools. An elementary school of 50 students located in a small village has little in common, in terms of leadership demands, with a large consolidated secondary school in an urban area. The role of the school board will similarly vary depending on the complexity of the school and the need for sophisticated, full-time administrative capacity.

Second, expecting more active institutional management is unreasonable without at least some increase in the budget for school administration. The school leader of a small school is unlikely, for example, to be able to assert strong curricular leadership in the one day a week available for all administrative duties.

Third, because most Dutch schools are co-managed by school board members who serve as unpaid volunteers, capacity needs to be built at this level to make increased autonomy effective.

Finally, the recent introduction of pre-service training programmes for school leaders cannot solve the pressing needs of the next decade. Most school leader positions will continue to be

filled by incumbents who have widely varying management skills, and for whom there is no existing in-service programme.

Corollaries of these assertions are:

i) the need to develop a clearer definition of what is to be reasonably expected of school leaders and boards in a period of increased demand for institutional management;
ii) the need to adjust the allocation of either teacher or school leader time to meet these needs; and
iii) the need to develop modular professional development programmes (perhaps along the lines of those used in Sweden) to generate the needed capacity.

- *What managerial responsibilities previously resting with government should be taken over by the schools and school boards, and which should remain with the national government?*
- *What role will the government play in meeting the developmental needs of school leaders and school boards? Are these tasks to be carried out by the responsible authorities at the school level, or should they be based on nationally-developed frameworks?*

Minorities and the disadvantaged: the need for targeted interventions

The Dutch have done a great deal to grapple with the increasingly multi-cultural character of their urban schools. Furthermore, the new coalition agreement includes language indicating the need to develop broad cross-ministry policies to deal with the educational, social and employment problems facing the minority population. While admitting that education cannot solve issues of racial and social inequality by itself, some shifts in policy should be considered along the lines discussed in Chapter 6.

Without repeating these arguments, we ask:

- *Will the government develop more focused and targeted policies that attempt to reach minority children at an earlier age, and extend the constructive policies at the primary school to the secondary levels, providing, for example, alternative educational environments for junior secondary students to increase retention, increasing the employment of minorities as teachers and/or support staff in schools, and provide more in-school guidance for adolescents from minority groups?*
- *What role will the government be able and willing to play in encouraging increased integration of minorities in a system that is predominantly private?*
- *Will the government develop more targeted intervention programmes for educationally and socially disadvantaged youth who are Dutch nationals? In particular, how will programmes to promote equality of educational opportunity and attainment be mounted within the basic education regulations?*

Consolidating the system

In several areas, particularly in higher education and adult education, the government has a better developed set of initiatives than are currently being implemented. In these areas, a level of activity somewhere between "taking a rest" and promoting major new innovations seems appropriate.

Higher education

In large measure, the discussion in Chapter 5 indicates that the main work to be done in institutions of higher education is to finish implementing efforts that have already begun. In

particular, whether the reform of higher education will be successful over the long run will depend on several critical features:

i) whether the articulation between secondary education and higher education can be improved;
ii) whether the relationship between the two sectors of higher education – universities and higher vocational education institutes – can be better defined;
iii) whether the now skeletal system of post-graduate education can be developed in ways that provide sufficient quality in training without additional wrenching changes over the next few years; and
iv) whether some realignment of the assessment/evaluation system should be planned.

The new coalition agreement allocates no additional funding for higher education. However, achieving the objectives outlined above will require internal reallocation of resources. It is not entirely clear that effective development of policies in all of these areas is compatible with the additional aim of even greater freedom over budgets, personnel policies, and other aspects of management that have currently been implemented.

To give one example, if decisions about the distribution of Assistants in Training (AIOs) among departments is made by individual universities, the chances are very great that there will be no change from the current situation, which further implies that the problem of tiny graduate level programmes will remain unchallenged. Yet, if the government makes decisions about which departments will have more AIOs, the policy of institutional autonomy will be viewed rather skeptically in universities.

Current consolidation needs may also conflict with other policies. From one perspective, autonomy policies suggest that each institution of higher education should be free to develop its own policies regarding admission to programmes. Yet, this conflicts with current practices regarding academic autonomy for individual students, as well as with the need to obtain better articulation between universities and HBOs. Thus, we ask:

– *How does the government plan to address the consolidation issues outlined above – articulation between secondary and higher education, articulation between universities and HBOs and the further development of graduate programmes – in a manner consistent with the policy of increasing institutional management?*
– *Does the government share our view that the current objective of expanding post-graduate education requires a thorough needs assessment and evaluation of the current situation?*

There are also some questions that relate more specifically to the two types of higher education institutions:

– *Within the policy of institutional autonomy, how can the government policy improve the balance between faculty rewards for teaching, curriculum development and research in universities?*
– *Will the government request that universities, secondary schools and the new committee to examine education and labour market articulation address ways of improving students' choice of subjects in universities?*

We commend the steps that have been taken to introduce the more differentiated and peer-review-based system for distributing research funding. At the same time, we ask:

– *How many different forms of assessment should exist for higher education? How should multiple forms of assessment be articulated?*

There has been some emphasis on encouraging the HBOs to become more entrepreneurial, providing specialised training and applied research to private industry. As Teichler (1989*b*)

notes, in 1987 even the most aggressive HBOs regarded themselves as not sufficiently developed to be an attractive research partner. HBOs need room to solidify the quality of their educational programmes, and to take care of the difficult internal process of finalising mergers which require a decade or more. We would like to see the HBOs adequately funded to do their educational job, and only slowly begin to develop a programme to serve new needs of specific industries and/or perform applied research.

In particular, in Chapter 5, we pointed out that the HBO system could, in the long run, be no better than the faculty. Given this context:

- *What does the government propose to do to improve the status of HBO teachers in order to retain and recruit the most talented?*
- *What type of staff development programmes will the government propose to provide HBO instructors with the continuous development necessary to refresh themselves?*

Adult education

We agree with the recent OECD (1989) economic survey which concluded that "While the spending on formal education appears relatively high by international standards, continuing education appears neglected" (p. 73). The largely unco-ordinated system seems to provide well-educated and employed adults who want to brush up on a foreign language or learn some new computer skills with what they want, but it is not well positioned to serve those who are most in need. Flexibility in providing part-time "adult education" for school-age adolescents in part-time vocational training programmes is a sensible development that can improve articulation of education with the labour market, but more needs to be done in this area, particularly for "real adults". As was pointed out in Chapter 5, the current issue is not so much the availability of money as the problems of implementing effective programmes at the local level.

As stated in Chapter 5, it is not necessarily useful to co-ordinate all of the successful private initiatives centrally. However, a major issue is that there seems to be no existing documentation of all activities that are occurring in the general field of job-related adult education, both government and privately stimulated. Clearly, before more initiatives are developed, it is imperative to know more concretely what is being done.

Efforts to mix educational and job training programmes for adults will, at minimum, require co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and Science and that of Social Affairs, and local agencies that can deliver existing programmes as well as develop new ones. Unfortunately, this joint responsibility often creates a policy vacuum, where there is more discussion of need than design of programmes and implementation responsibilities, and where different agency perspectives hamper local actions.

- *How will the government ensure better cross-ministerial co-ordination and planning around educational programmes for adults who are in sectors of structural unemployment, or who lack adequate basic skills?*
- *What will the government do to encourage adult second-chance vocational education for persons who belong neither to those that need vocational upgrading within their current job, nor to the ranks of the under-unemployed?*

Financing

We did not obtain a complete picture of the financing of the education system during our brief two-week stay. Nevertheless, there are a number of simple questions that can be asked.

Facing the costs of freedom and easy access

To an outsider, opportunities for educational budget reductions looked promising at the beginning of the 1980s. After all, the Netherlands spent nearly the highest amount of its GNP on education, so relatively speaking one might expect some "fat" to be included. However, the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of education, most notably the right to establish separate primary and general secondary schools, as well as corresponding teacher training and educational support for each school with a minimum enrolment, is bound to lead to a system that is relatively less "efficient" and more expensive. Additional expense is introduced to support the strong (although not constitutionally guaranteed) preference for primary schools that are located within walking distance of pupils' homes. These are conditions that the majority of Dutch people are clearly willing to pay for, but which make cutting expenses more difficult.

We accept the central value of freedom of choice in the primary and secondary education system as an inherent characteristic of the Dutch system, and see no justification for proposing any general debate on this issue at this time. However, as with the problem of minority education, we suggest that a more narrow discussion of some of the economic tensions introduced by current interpretations of the Constitution may be useful, albeit controversial. In particular:

- *Is the government willing to review the combined costs of pillarisation and the principle of easy access to schools in programmes, such as special education, that serve very small numbers of students in some locations, so that trade-offs between free choice and easy access for a few, and quality of education for the majority are clear?*
- *Will the government consider whether the preservation of the small primary teacher training colleges is consistent with the policy of increasing the quality and number of primary school teachers in the near future?*
- *If the policy to continue to support small schools is maintained, will the government allocate sufficient additional resources to make these institutions educationally and managerially viable?*

Darwinian approaches to educational design

To date, the policy promoting mergers of small schools has been a "hands off" policy – which means that there are few regulations about how to merge, but also little money to support mergers. This has led to a situation in which the variety of different types of secondary school configurations is quite astonishing to an outsider. Some schools have chosen to merge so that junior and senior streams are associated (MAVO with HAVO/VWO, for example). Others have chosen a variety of horizontal partners (MAVO with LBO; SVM-policy in MBO). A few even try to cover the entire spectrum, including VWO, HAVO, MAVO and LBO within a single school. Most mergers at the primary/secondary level have been within pillars, although in a small number of cases private schools from different pillars have accommodated to each other.

Unplanned variability is increasing. The pattern of locally-initiated mergers enlarges the bewildering variety of educational options available to students, and in addition, schools that are not attractive partners, or that make poor merger choices because of the available options, may decline in size and quality over the coming years.

In addition, the limited data available suggest that the hands-off merger policy may be leading to unanticipated inequities in educational opportunities between regions. For example, it was reported that in the South there is much more pressure on VWO/atheneum/gymnasium schools to remain separate, and for the MAVO/LBO schools to become isolated. Similarly, in non-urban areas where merger partners are fewer, "weak" merger partners that serve an impor-

tant social function may be permitted to erode in size and quality because they are unable to arrange marriages within their pillar.

Further, there seems to have been little consideration given to the desirability of increasingly larger schools in all cases. Recent studies by the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau indicating that larger schools have economic benefits and few drawbacks only begin to explore this critical question. Some studies in the United States have indicated that large secondary schools provide poorer opportunities for the social development of students, and that large schools produce poorer results among disadvantaged populations (Pittman and Haughwout, 1987; Fetler, 1989). Studies in other countries suggest that there are at least limits of size beyond which administrative problems increase and opportunities for social development are poor.

We believe that, despite the coalition's agreement to press forward with further mergers, this is an important moment to consider the implications of the "hands off" merger policy. In particular:

- *To what degree will a "no cost" mechanism for gaining efficiencies through increasing size create more serious problems of inequity of educational options available to students in future years? Are the costs of reorganising the Dutch system into increasingly larger, comprehensive schools being increased, but postponed for future generations?*
- *Will the government consider developing constructive policies that offer some financial incentives or other kinds of support to schools that must merge in the next few years?*

The end of reductions

Reduction of expenses was a major driving force for government policy in most sectors at the beginning of the 1980s. High public debts, low economic growth and high unemployment made this policy almost inevitable. The entire education system has been deeply affected by these financial constraints, in addition to changing student populations (decreasing in primary and secondary systems; increasing in the tertiary system).

The complicated statistical material presented by different agencies suggests that educational expenses did not grow in real terms, and undoubtedly became a smaller proportion of the GNP. The cuts seem to have led to savings of about 8 per cent (with some unknown portion being a transfer of effort between the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Social Affairs). Most of this "savings" was absorbed in serving rising student numbers in some expensive educational sectors, such as special education, and for some innovations that required additional funds.

Although the attempt to reduce educational expenses was clearly less successful than intended, we share the increasingly widespread view in the Netherlands that further reductions are very undesirable, and that targeted increases may be desirable in some sectors. The current coalition agreement also reflects that view, proposing modest increases of approximately Gld 500 million.

However, we nevertheless raise the following questions with regard to the costs of initiating and maintaining the programme of innovations initiated by the previous government and proposed by the new one:

- *What are the estimates of the real costs of implementing a new model of basic education in secondary schools? Will the increased allocations to secondary schools be adequate to cover the costs of implementing this model without distorting other areas of school functioning?*

- *Is the proposed budget allocation of Gld 70 million to the goal of increasing the ability of primary schools, in particular, to serve a wider range of special needs children in the regular school realistic given the existing pressures, staffing issues and morale problems documented in this report?*
- *Will the government consider ways of temporarily or permanently augmenting teacher salaries to compensate for the developmental work necessary at the school level to implement current and proposed innovations?*
- *Will proposed increases be directed to staff development and improving capacities within the school as well as salary increases or new staff positions?*
- *Will the government review the longer-term consequences of the relatively larger budget reductions in upper secondary vocational education, at a time when primary and other secondary budgets remain more stable?*
- *What are the consequences of the effective cuts in the allocation of funding to teaching in universities during a period when these institutions are expected to implement fundamental changes in their educational programmes?*

Conclusion

In Chapters 1 and 2 we outlined some of the characteristics of the Dutch culture and educational history that helped us to understand both the nature of current policies and the content of debates. We have asked a number of difficult questions in this chapter, but have attempted to pose them so as to be consistent with our understanding of these basic characteristics. In our view, they represent real questions that can and should be addressed in the next few years, and not empty challenges that require radical or unworkable solutions. The process of effective educational reform in developed countries is, in the terms of other authors, best viewed as steady work rather than rapid dramatic action.

In sum, the Dutch education system is well positioned to take on a range of new challenges, in spite of some of the weaknesses to which we have pointed. Many of the hardest shifts have already been confronted, such as the changes in the structure of higher education programmes and institutions. Other positive factors also contribute: for the most part, we sensed willingness to move among those in educational institutions, and not alienation or despair; a period of government transition always provides a "honeymoon" window of opportunity to review policies and renegotiate relationships; and the increasingly solid economic situation has permitted increases in the educational budget, albeit less than many would wish. Above all, the historical commitment to quality and equality in education suggests that the task will continue to be taken very seriously, at all levels and among all sectors.

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Appendix

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

Table A.1. **The Netherlands and the EEC and EFTA countries**
Some basic statistics: international comparisons

	Units	Reference period	EEC countries				
			Belgium	Denmark	France	Germany	Greece
Population							
Total	Thousands	1987	9868	5130	55627	61149	9998
Inhabitants per sq. km	Number		324	119	102	246	76
Net average annual increase over previous 10 years	%		0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.7
Employment							
Total civilian employment (TCE)	Thousands	1987	3645 (86)	2630 (86)	20988	25456	3601 (86)
of which: Agriculture	% of TCE		2.9	5.9	7.1	5.2	28.5
Industry	% of TCE		29.7	28.2	30.8	40.5	28.1
Services	% of TCE		67.4	65.9	62.1	54.3	43.4
Unemployment	%	1987	11.1	7.8	10.5	7.9	7.4
Labour force participation rates by sex							
Males	%	1987	75.2	87.2	75.6	79.9	75.8
Females	%		50.2	75.9	55.7	55.7	41.7
Gross domestic product (GDP)							
Per capita	US$	1987	14071	19750	15818	18880	4719
Gross fixed capital formation	% of GDP	1987	16.3	18.8	19.4	19.4	17.4
General government							
Current expenditure on goods and services	% of GDP	1987	16.3	25.4	19.1	19.8	19.5
Indicators of living standards							
Private consumption per capita	US$	1987	7593	7236	7796	7374	4273
Foreign trade							
Exports of goods	% of GDP	1987	59.8	25.3	16.8	26.2	13.9
Imports of goods	% of GDP		59.9	25.1	17.4	20.4	27.9
Gross domestic R&D expenditure	% of GDP	1987	1.61 (86)	1.24 (85)	2.28	2.71	0.33 (86)

Sources: Basic Statistics: International Comparisons - 1988/1989, *OECD Economic Surveys. Netherlands*, OECD, Paris, 1989;
OECD Employment Outlook, July 1989, OECD, Paris, 1989;
Reviews of National Science and Technology Policy, Switzerland, OECD, Paris, 1989.

Table A.1. *(Continued)*

	Units	Reference period	EEC countries				
			Ireland	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Portugal
Population							
Total	Thousands	1987	3 542	57 331	372	14 671	10 280
Inhabitants per sq. km	Number		50	190	143	432	112
Net average annual increase over previous 10 years	%		0.8	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.7
Employment							
Total civilian employment (TCE)	Thousands	1987	1 068 (86)	20 584	164 (86)	5 135 (86)	4 156
of which: Agriculture	% of TCE		15.7	10.5	3.7	4.9	21.9
Industry	% of TCE		28.7	32.6	32.9	25.5	35.8
Services	% of TCE		55.5	56.8	63.4	69.6	42.3
Unemployment	%	1987	17.5	11.0	1.6	8.7	7.1
Labour force participation rates by sex							
Males	%	1987	84.3	79.0	..	75.0	84.7
Females	%		38.5	43.4	..	41.9	57.4
Gross domestic product (GDP)							
Per capita	US$	1987	8 297	13 224	16 138	14 530	3 761
Gross fixed capital formation	% of GDP	1987	17.4	19.9	22.6	20.3	25.3
General government							
Current expenditure on goods and services	% of GDP	1987	18.0	16.7	16.7	16.1	14.4
Indicators of living standards							
Private consumption per capita	US$	1987	4 378	7 543	8 694	7 461	4 167
Foreign trade							
Exports of goods	% of GDP	1987	54.8	15.4	..	43.1	25.3
Imports of goods	% of GDP		64.8	16.6	..	42.4	36.7
Gross domestic R&D expenditure	% of GDP	1987	0.92 (86)	1.28	..	2.21 (86)	0.45 (86)

Sources: Basic Statistics: International Comparisons - 1988/1989, *OECD Economic Surveys. Netherlands*, OECD, Paris, 1989;
OECD Employment Outlook, July 1989, OECD, Paris, 1989;
Reviews of National Science and Technology Policy, Switzerland, OECD, Paris, 1989.

Table A.1. *(Continued)*

	Units	Reference period	EEC countries		EFTA countries		
			Spain	United Kingdom	Austria	Finland	Iceland
Population							
Total	Thousands	1987	38 830	56 890	7 575	4 932	245
Inhabitants per sq. km	Number		77	232	90	15	76
Net average annual increase over previous 10 years	%		0.7	0.1	0.0	0.4	1.0
Employment							
Total civilian employment (TCE)	Thousands	1987	11 370	24 987	3 297	2 414	117 (86)
of which: Agriculture	% of TCE		16.1	2.4	8.6	10.2	10.3
Industry	% of TCE		32.0	29.8	37.7	31.2	36.8
Services	% of TCE		51.8	67.8	53.7	58.4	53.0
Unemployment	%	1987	20.5	10.2	3.5	5.1	0.5
Labour force participation rates by sex							
Males	%	1987	77.9	88.3	81.0	81.4	..
Females	%		37.5	62.6	53.1	72.9	..
Gross domestic product (GDP)							
Per capita	US$	1987	7 449	11 765	15 470	18 151	21 813
Gross fixed capital formation	% of GDP	1987	20.7	17.3	19.4	22.6	23.5
General government							
Current expenditure on goods and services	% of GDP	1987	14.4	20.9	19.0	20.7	17.7
Indicators of living standards							
Private consumption per capita	US$	1987	5 521	7 731	6 535	6 966	9 930[a]
Foreign trade							
Exports of goods	% of GDP	1987	11.8	19.7	23.8	22.1	25.8
Imports of goods	% of GDP		17.0	23.2	27.7	21.4	29.9
Gross domestic R&D expenditure	% of GDP	1987	0.57 (86)	2.42 (86)	2.28	1.6	0.73 (86)

a) At current prices and exchange rates.

Sources: Basic Statistics: International Comparisons - 1988/1989, *OECD Economic Surveys. Netherlands*, OECD, Paris, 1989;
OECD Employment Outlook, July 1989, OECD, Paris, 1989;
Reviews of National Science and Technology Policy, Switzerland, OECD, Paris, 1989.

Table A.1. *(Continued)*

	Units	Reference period	EFTA countries		
			Norway	Sweden	Switzerland
Population					
Total	Thousands	1987	4 184	8 399	6 610
Inhabitants per sq. km	Number		13	19	160
Net average annual increase over previous 10 years	%		0.3	0.2	0.5
Employment					
Total civilian employment (TCE)	Thousands	1987	2 090	24 987	3 219 (86)
of which: Agriculture	% of TCE		6.1	4.2	6.5
Industry	% of TCE		27.0	30.2	37.7
Services	% of TCE		66.3	65.6	55.8
Unemployment	%	1987	2.1	1.9	0.7
Labour force participation rates by sex					
Males	%	1987	87.9	84.8	89.8
Females	%		72.3	79.4	54.6
Gross domestic product (GDP)					
Per capita	US$	1987	19 756	18 876	25 848
Gross fixed capital formation	% of GDP	1987	28.0	19.0	25.2
General government					
Current expenditure on goods and services	% of GDP	1987	20.9	26.7	12.8
Indicators of living standards					
Private consumption per capita	US$	1987	8 155	7 273	9 349[a]
Foreign trade					
Exports of goods	% of GDP	1987	26.2	27.9	26.6
Imports of goods	% of GDP		27.0	25.5	29.6
Gross domestic R&D expenditure	% of GDP	1987	1.82	2.93[b]	2.89 (86)

a) At current prices and exchange rates.
b) Social and human sciences excluded.
Sources: Basic Statistics: International Comparisons - 1988/1989, *OECD Economic Surveys. Netherlands*, OECD, Paris, 1989;
OECD Employment Outlook, July 1989, OECD, Paris, 1989;
Reviews of National Science and Technology Policy, Switzerland, OECD, Paris, 1989.

Part Two

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE REVIEW MEETING

Paris, 25 April 1990

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Chair of the Education Committee, *Mr. Hummeluhr* (Denmark), opened the session and turned the floor over to Mr. Lennart Bodström, who thanked the Dutch government for its hospitality and its efforts to make the work of the examiners progress smoothly.

Mr. Bodström turned the floor over to *Dr. Karen Seashore Louis*, the Rapporteur, who summarised the context for the review, noting that there were three main areas of tension in the Dutch education system:

i) governance, where the main questions revolved around how centralised or decentralised the system should be;

ii) structure, where the most critical issues relate to the unresolved issue of at what stage in the students' careers they should be directed into distinctive educational streams; and

iii) finance, where the fiscal crises of the past decade have created problems in all educational sectors, and continuing questions about the need for greater efficiency in the system if broad social goals are to be met. In the context of these enduring tensions, the examiners proposed four groups of questions around which to organise the discussion:

- those related to the proposed shift in governance;
- those related to the effects of the fiscal problems on compulsory education;
- those related to the effects of the fiscal crisis and reform in post-compulsory education; and
- those related to issues of equity and access to education.

Dr. Jo Ritzen, Minister of Education in the Netherlands, responded to the Examiners' Report. He noted that the report was refreshing, and that it had already contributed to the debates over educational policy in the new cabinet. Dr. Ritzen went on to point out that the need for changes in educational policy to respond to the issues raised by the examiners was great, due to technological developments, the changing demographics of society which are resulting in an increasingly older population, and the rapidly growing interdependence of national economies.

Dr. Ritzen stated that three topics that receive extensive treatment in the report are also perceived to be major issues in the government. First is the question of "school autonomy," a persistent topic for educational policy issue in the Netherlands. According to Dr. Ritzen, autonomy is a misused word in the context of Dutch education: the real issue is the nature of the relationship between government and schools in which schools are expected to perform a social duty, and to take advantage of their own environment and perspectives to enrich the educational process. A second important issue is a new one: the emphasis on teachers and the quality of teachers work lives in schools. The third critical policy issue is one that has cycled in and out of policy priorities in the Netherlands, but is currently of great concern: the question of equality of educational opportunity and educational performance.

Policy discussions that have already been initiated in the Ministry and the new coalition government are consistent with, and responsive to, many of the issues raised in the Examiners' Report. These include:

- the need for more opportunities for minority pupils and those from lower social and economic backgrounds, which includes shifting resources to serve the needs of those pupils;
- the reassertion of commitment to the policy of the previous government to grant more autonomy over a variety of management issues to schools;
- the search for mechanisms to revitalise the life of teachers, including improving the self-esteem of the profession;
- the effort to seek rapid passage for the basic education bill, which will extend a common set of learning objectives through the first three years of lower secondary school;
- an effort to reexamine thoroughly the situation of special education, with an emphasis on strategies to reduce the number of children assigned to special schools, and increase the ability of regular schools to handle children with minor learning and behaviour problems;
- a beginning discussion about the need to reorient the structure of upper secondary education to respond to concerns that it is not responsive to the needs of many students.
- an increased effort to set up a system of graduate schools.

Each of these efforts to respond to the needs outlined in the report must be placed, however, in the context of the continuing fiscal constraints of the Dutch economy, which is still battling a national deficit under conditions where the public will not accept new taxes. Dr. Ritzen was hopeful that changing conditions in Eastern Europe would make some budget reallocations possible. Allocation problems also exist within the education budget, however, as the increasing enrolment in higher education continues to limit resources available for renewal in the primary and secondary sectors.

Dr. Ritzen concluded his opening remarks by pointing to the importance of framing discussions about educational policy within the broader question of the limits and possibilities of the government's role and responsibility to advance the interests of the individual and the needs of society, a subject that is not raised in the report.

2. GOVERNANCE

Dr. Ulrich Teichler summarised the main concerns of the examiners:

i) will the "steering at a distance" policy be the same for all sectors;
ii) will there be a reduction of procedural controls over schools and institutions of higher education;
iii) how does the government view the balance between setting performance targets for educational institutions, relative institutional autonomy and the assessment of "educational outputs";
iv) will there be a "period of rest" in government initiatives that might permit institutions to work out their own responses to changing governance policies;
v) will there be sufficient money available for the implementation of the "steering at a distance policy".

Dr. Ritzen stated that these questions are very much to the point. He chose to respond to the fourth question first, pointing out that educational institutions need not only rest, but also should pay attention to the changing demands on education. The problem up to this point is that demands for change have not sufficiently attended to the problem of implementation; the result is a need to consolidate and actually carry out those current policy initiatives that exist largely on paper.

The Minister, however, challenged the language of "steering at a distance", indicating that the image of a hands-off relationship between the government and educational institutions was not always appropriate. He indicated that there was a need to look more closely at contractual relationships between the parties, in which the performance and management expectations in return for greater flexibility of operation are clearly spelled out and understood. He pointed out that it was important in each case to look at the costs and benefits of government intervention, and indicated that in some cases a "steering at a distance" policy was not appropriate, because of the priority of other educational goals. For example, the government believed that there was still a need to press forward regarding economies of scale, and planned to increase the minimum size requirements for a primary school and for special education. Another example is the area of establishing minimum performance standards for student achievement, where there is growing consensus that this is both appropriate and socially feasible.

He agreed strongly that schools and teachers need to have the financial resources to carry out any government demands that are made on them: further initiatives and demands cannot be assumed to be "cost-free".

The Chair, *Mr. Hummeluhr*, asked to take all questions together, and permit a unified response by the Dutch delegation.

The delegate from Denmark asked whether there would be an actual reduction in the size of the government bureaucracy, since the Background Report mentioned a reduction in the Ministry, but an increase in the Inspectorate.

The delegate from Sweden asked how the ageing of society, pointed to as a major trend by the Minister, was affecting priorities for educational reform in the Netherlands.

The delegate from Greece asked how the governance policies applied to universities, and how incentive systems could be created to prevent educational institutions from merely slipping back into old familiar patterns of behaviour. Conversely, how is it possible to maintain a consensus on the need for rest in a society where there are many conflicting interests with regard to education?

The delegate from Norway asked how it would be possible to set output objectives about a more profound knowledge of educational processes and inputs.

The delegate from France commented that the aspirations of current Dutch educational policy were very ambitious, and very focused on the need for innovation and reshaping, and wondered how such broad system aspirations could be met in the context of a system in which the government set social contracts with individual schools or smaller groups of schools.

Dr. Ritzen, indicated that questions fell into two main categories: a concern with more detail about the overall aims of the changing governance policy, and a desire for more details about how the new system would function. He indicated that his brief answer to the first set of questions about aims was quite simple: an aim of current policies is to increase the education system's emphasis on "learning how to learn": the real need in education is to create an environment in which lifelong learning is both an educational goal, and a set of individual behaviours.

As to how it will be carried out, in many cases the details are not yet clear. For example, if the Netherlands wants to steer at a distance, there are real implications for the Ministry. At this point, they are not yet reorganising but are setting out the frameworks in which reorganisation will proceed. The Inspectorate can serve as an example of this: although weaker than in other countries, the government's intent is to strengthen its position with regard to "meso-research", or the analysis of the situation in groups of schools. This will increase the knowledge of the inputs and processes that are critical to the implementation of steering at a distance policy.

In higher education, governance changes are already implemented — the major problem is transferring the successful reforms at that level to primary/secondary schools. Another major issue is whether the scale of existing schools is large enough to permit self-management, while a third is increasing schools' awareness of the need and usefulness of greater managerial flexibility. This is not as difficult as it might be in other countries, because of the historical character of Dutch education, which is publicly funded but to a large extent privately provided.

A major element of the strategy for implementation revolves around relationships with business, which are strong because of the economic needs. Business, however, has been less willing to form partnerships at the macro-level (changes in the tax structure to support education) and the meso-level (provision of equipment, particularly for vocational education).

The government must also confront the false impression that dramatic changes in governance are in order: the need is for adjustments and not dramatic changes.

Mr. Jacques Wallage, Deputy Minister of Education in the Netherlands, made several additional comments in response to the questions. First, he pointed out that steering issues will be different in elementary and secondary education. And, as another example, it was necessary to consider the different kinds of "social contracts" that would be negotiated with school boards that govern a single school, as compared to those that have many schools within their jurisdiction.

There is also the question of how to deal with the governance of small schools. Even if the average scale increases, there will still be many small schools in the Netherlands — schools that will have trouble coping with the demands of change and improvement. The government needs to develop a system so that these schools are better able to cope and adapt.

In addition, it will take a long time to reach consensus about "steering at a distance". There are pressures towards centralisation from the umbrella organisations and the unions which counteract the requests for deregulation from other sources. The real question facing the government is whether the education system can move forward with more comprehensive forms of education and increases in the scale of individual schools without centralised directives. The current policy answer is to make mergers more attractive and to promote networks of schools so that students can make choices later in their career, as opposed to pressing towards major structural reforms.

The delegate from Germany asked whether the recent change in the government had resulted in a more prominent role for education, or new attitudes and priorities, such as vocational or adult education. *The delegate from the United Kingdom* asked whether there was a change in the level of support for primary education.

Dr. Ritzen replied that the problems of financial support for education in the Netherlands are very real, and budget scarcity is likely to persist in education. The recently negotiated small increases in the budget are specifically targeted, reflecting new priorities. Money is going to adult education, to the reinforcing basic education, to special education and to primary education (4 year-olds). There will be a need to address the issue of student grants and loans, as a consequence of the increasing enrolments, and there are likely to be more severe limits on the number of years for which students may expect support. There is an expectation that the special needs of vocational education may be met through new partnerships with business.

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With respect to the question from the United Kingdom, Dr. Ritzen agreed with the Examiners' Report with regard to primary schools being stretched to the limit, but did not currently foresee easy ways of making major budget changes.

Ulrich Teichler summarised the discussion for the examiners, indicating that "steering at a distance" represented an evolving framework rather than a final policy. The discussion revealed that the government understood that it did not make sense to withdraw from governance completely, but also that there was a need to negotiate as to details for bridging the framework and the needs of individual institutions. He noted that the questions of assessment had not been much addressed in the discussion, and that these were still at a very preliminary stage: it is not possible yet to say what the Dutch answer will be. He also noted, however, that the examiners stood by their position that there was a distinct consensus on the need for a shift in governance, despite potential resistance from certain parties and groups.

Dr. Ritzen made a brief rejoinder, indicating that there is a consensus and political commitment on the need for more budgetary and policy freedom at the school level. However, the question of bringing other interest groups along should not be viewed as a minor issue of negotiation.

3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Dr. Louis opened with remarks from the examiners, pointing out that, although there were many issues raised about compulsory education in the report, the main points focused around personnel and management issues:

- Does the government agree with the examiners' finding that the position of teachers has deteriorated? What do they intend to do to address the problems faced by teachers?
- Does the government agree with the observation that the capacity for management in many schools is very limited? If so, what steps would they take to improve management capacities?
- Does the government agree that the capacity of effective training of sufficient new teachers in the Netherlands is currently low, particularly at the primary level? What policies were planned to increase the capacity for high quality teacher training programmes?

Dr. Ritzen began by commenting on some general trends that relate to these questions. First, he pointed out that the changing status of teachers reflected a general shift in the occupational structure, in which more positions now require high levels of education and professionalism. Thus, teachers have experienced a relative loss of status. Second, the changing characteristics and behaviour patterns of students, a phenomenon not limited to the Netherlands, make it harder to teach with traditional methods. Finally, parents are increasingly challenging the authority of teachers, setting patterns in which teachers are unsure whether their approach to dealing with students will be supported in the home.

These are conditions that the government cannot change, but the government must do what it can to increase the professionalism of teachers. Much more emphasis needs to be placed on teacher training — and retraining to keep teachers up to date over their careers. Dr. Ritzen agreed with the view of the examiners regarding the need to think through the reward structure for teachers very carefully, and to create the right rewards to enhance teacher professionalism.

Mr. Wallage added to these remarks, noting that the problem is not society's view of teachers — surveys in the Netherlands indicate that public opinion still holds teachers in high regard. The problem is that teachers themselves have lower self-esteem. It is not possible to buy effectiveness and self-esteem among teachers simply with higher salaries; it is necessary to increase the government's sensitivity to the ecology of teaching. It would be helpful, on the other hand, to raise the beginning salaries of teachers immediately, as was recommended by the examiners. This is not possible for budgetary reasons.

Now it is important to assure the unions about the long-term commitment of the government to improving teachers' working conditions and salaries. Without such a working "social contract", the government will not be able to make progress on developing a more professional work environment for teachers.

Mr. Wallage also emphasized the need to improve the situation of the primary teacher training institutions. At the moment, the emphasis is not on mergers, however, but on increasing the professionalism in performance of the teacher training institutions.

The delegate from France, Mr. Bréant, asked why the Dutch training system provided separate educational experiences for teachers in primary and lower secondary school, when most countries were moving towards educational philosophies which emphasized the need for less differentiation in instruction for younger adolescents.

The delegate from Australia asked for more information about the intended "social contract" between the government and teacher unions: how high a profile does the Ministry expect this "contract" to have? What will the agreements consist of?

Dr. Ritzen responded, indicating that the unions have been in a conflict situation with the government in the recent past, but view the change in government as an opportunity to "play a new game". There have been strong indications from the unions that they are eager to engage in new discussions. Dr. Ritzen indicated that he hoped that these discussions would result in a broad package of policy agreements, covering reward structures, working conditions, retraining of teachers, and so on. The real question is how will it be possible to achieve a new contract of this type with so few fiscal resources. The challenge will be to arrive at some reallocation within this sector of education, for example by abolishing some tasks for teachers, or accomplishing some broad educational tasks more efficiently. It is the goal of the government to get the unions involved in such discussions early, before they have pinned themselves down to opposing or demanding specific changes. Because of the history of conflict and mistrust, there is a very long way to go to address this problem.

Mr. Wallage replied to Mr. Bréant's question, indicating that it was one that he wished that his own country would ask. Parliament recently refused to create a single teacher training institution. It will not be possible to raise this issue again in the short run, but he expected that it will be necessary to address it in the long run.

However, the issue is not only the need for an integrated structure, but the necessity of reconsidering teacher education as part of the broader task of redefining the career and role of the teacher. In particular, it will be important to think about what teacher education will consist of in schools where there is greater co-management. Mr. Wallage concluded by noting that the direction of government policy in this regard is quite clear — the real issue is implementation.

The delegate from Germany indicated that in his country there was consensus that teacher training should take place in universities, in order to improve the professional status of teachers. He also remarked that he disagreed with the examiners' conclusion that the increasing number of part-time primary teachers posed a problem for the quality of education. He viewed part-time

teachers as a solution to the problems faced by working women and the increasing number of redundancies among teachers.

The delegate from Denmark asked how the retraining of teachers was currently carried out: are there national programmes now, and who conducts them?

Dr. Ritzen indicated that, in general, the quality of teacher training was not perceived to be a problem. The government's policy is to use positive incentives to improve quality and increase the size of those teacher training institutions that do not meet the highest standards, rather than to emphasize structural changes in the system at the moment.

With regard to the question from the Danish representative, the Dutch policy is not to centralise teacher retraining. Policy is to transfer budgets from teacher training colleges (the supply side) to the schools (the demand side). After a transition period in which the teacher training colleges will have a privileged position, the schools will be completely free in spending their retraining budget.

Mr. Wallage disagreed that increasing the number of part-time teachers was a sound policy, indicating that the unions supported this policy for the reasons that the delegate from Germany had indicated. He agreed that part-time teachers create educational problems in the schools. In addition, the problem of redundancies was no longer an issue in the Netherlands; rather there is a projected shortage of teachers which is already beginning to be felt in the larger cities and in some specific subjects. The main problem will be how to attract teachers back into the profession; to do so, some system of decentralised retraining will need to be developed which does not rely solely on the teacher training institutions.

Dr. Louis summarised the discussion from the examiner's perspective, remarking that it was very gratifying to see the somewhat critical perspectives of the Examiners' Report so quickly translated into a set of policy directions. She pointed out, however, that the question of how to increase the management capacities of the schools had not been fully addressed in the discussion, which focused almost exclusively on the situation of teachers and teacher training institutions.

Dr. Ritzen made a brief rejoinder, indicating that the policy directions were agreed upon as a result of the first draft of the report, which the government received in December. He emphasized that the question of teacher supply and teachers' professionalism were critical in other countries as well, and that there was a need for international co-operation to deal with the problem effectively if common economic and social development goals were to be addressed. He also emphasized that Dutch policy regarding school management was currently focused on the issue of size, because it is impossible to discuss improving management in schools that are too small to develop the capacity.

4. POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Dr. Louis, Mr. Bodström and *Dr. Teichler* summarised the examiners' position and questions related to post-compulsory education. The main overall concern focused on apparent deficiencies in articulation:

- within the secondary sector, where a large number of students seemed to be guided into inappropriate tracks;
- between the secondary and the tertiary sector;
- between the "first phase" of tertiary education and the nascent "second phase".

- between the different types of tertiary institutions; and
- between different and sometimes competing models in the poorly developed adult education sector.

Mr. Wallage began the Dutch delegation's response to the questions by noting that he was personally pleased that the examiners had raised the issue of the dullness of the university-track curriculum in secondary education. It was generally believed in the Netherlands that there were "no performance problems" in this area, yet the problems with curriculum are not limited to any specific secondary track. He went on to point out that the issues of articulation and drop-outs from various secondary tracks could not be separated from the larger problems of curriculum in all of the post-compulsory secondary streams. There is a need to confront the question of why all of the side-steps that students take in their secondary school career are necessary, and indicated that some of the problems may be a consequence of a poor guidance system. He pointed out that resistance to improving articulation and the "efficiency" of the system through, for example, better guidance, will be considerable: parents know that the system is hierarchical, and push their children into the higher general education streams, and if they fail, expect them to try again. Mr. Wallage also indicated that there needs to be a discussion of whether the differentiation between the university/preparatory track and the general secondary track that was intended to prepare students for higher vocational education was appropriate.

Dr. Ritzen addressed the questions relating to adult education, noting that he agreed with the need to consolidate efforts in this area. The older distinctions between adult education for personal development, and job-related training are no longer valid: each contributes to the other, and the adult education system must reflect this view. In addition, he pointed to the need to question the old assumption that "educational investments" in adults were socially inefficient, because of the short period of "depreciation". This view may have been reasonable in the past, but jobs now change so rapidly — every 5 to 10 years — that retraining and further education will be necessary for all adults and is socially profitable. Finally, the government must take a larger role in job training for the unemployed, in "second chance" education for those who dropped out when they were young, and in basic skills education for the functionally illiterate. Dr. Ritzen concluded by commenting that the government must develop policies that emphasize the need for paid educational leave throughout the working life of most adults.

The questions relating to higher education were also addressed by Dr. Ritzen. He agreed with the examiners that the propadeutic phase, intended to increase the efficiency of the university programme, was not serving its intended purpose of orientation, selection and guidance for the student. Doubts are increasing about the design of the propaedeutic year, and there will be efforts to rethink this issue. Every attempt was made, in the reform of the higher education system, to avoid selection among qualified candidates prior to entry into university.

The higher education system, according to Dr. Ritzen, has been successful in cutting through the stagnant debate about differentiation between different types of tertiary institutions. The labour market reinforces the differences, by assigning university-trained students to positions markedly different from graduates of the higher vocational system. In addition, he emphasized that the articulation between higher vocational education and universities, in terms of transfer policies, was already developing well. The significant problems do not lie in this arena, but in the need better to develop the "second phase" of university education into a graduate school. Currently in the second phase, the individual assistant in training is provided with an institutional home in which he or she can earn a Ph.D. degree, more or less on his own, in four years. The development of networks between university departments is a promising one, but needs to be institutionalised in programme requirements for students and faculty. Recently, an advisory committee has been set up to design a policy for "graduate schools" in the Netherlands.

Mr. Papadopoulos (OECD) remarked that the question of open access to higher education had been an issue in the Netherlands for a long time. How did Minister Ritzen plan to transform the Dutch attachment to "freedom of choice" for qualified university students? More broadly, how much influence would the government have, under a "steering at a distance" philosophy, over internal reforms in higher education?

The delegate from Greece remarked that there was a need to differentiate between university and higher vocational education in terms of research versus practice, and asked the Minister to comment about the issues concerning the balance between research and teaching that were raised in the Examiners' Report.

The delegate from Denmark asked for more details about what will happen if the informal networks become institutionalised into graduate schools.

The delegate from Australia stated that his country had just gone to a unified tertiary system, and wanted to know whether the degrees from both types of tertiary education in the Netherlands were the same. He also asked about the relationship between universities and teacher education.

Dr. Ritzen responded by first noting that his sensitivity to the difficulties of getting organisations to change, and of creating incentives for change in higher education had increased markedly in his new position on "the other side of the fence". The problem of curriculum reform, and a balanced emphasis on teaching and research was an excellent example of this. The problem in higher education is not that there is too little emphasis on creating new knowledge, but that the new knowledge is not always translated into the curriculum. There have been few incentives for curriculum renewal in higher education, and there is a need to initiate peer assessment procedures in teaching, which should stimulate departments to examine their textbooks and their curriculum.

The real problem in higher education is that of quality and effort. Public opinion with regard to higher education in the Netherlands is currently quite low and there is little sentiment for providing new investments to create innovation in universities. The government's hands-off governance policy implies that universities must find their own energies and resources for keeping themselves alive and improving their programmes: this is not the responsibility of the government. On the other hand, the poor climate of opinion endangers the vitality of the institutions, and it is the responsibility of the government to point to the internal reforms that are underway, and to change from an overly critical stance.

He pointed out that the formation of a graduate school is consistent with the emphasis on holding university resources relatively constant. The graduate school development is not an "add on" to university programmes, but in essence a reallocation of resources within the overall programme.

In response to Australia's question, the degrees awarded by higher vocational institutions and universities are different, and there is additional differentiation within the two types. One of his higher education priorities is to review and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the different degree programmes.

Dr. Teichler summarised the discussion by noting that the overall government policy was towards reasserting the differentiation between different components of the post-compulsory system(s). He raised a final question about the implications of current government policies for the long-held policy of equality between institutions of higher education. For example, he asked whether the current policies are likely to lead to greater differentiation between, or specialisation among, the Dutch universities – for example, in terms of programmes offered – or whether there will be a continued press for all to achieve a common level of quality in all fields.

Dr. Ritzen summarised the main thrusts of government policy in post-compulsory education, which included:

- de-emphasizing structural changes and emphasizing changes in procedures. For example, the response to concern about the propaedeutic year would be addressed through changes in the examination procedure, not in changing the structure of the new "first-phase" programme;
- increasing the emphasis, both in secondary and tertiary education, with allocation of students to the right programmes or tracks earlier;
- making programmes at all levels and in all tracks more attractive through curriculum renewal;
- changing the examination and feedback procedures to help students make appropriate choices of specialisation in higher education.

Dr. Ritzen pointed out that post-compulsory educational policies are currently under review and development. There needs to be better connections between separate policy thrusts, such as those outlined above, but the balance of emphasis has not yet been decided.

5. EQUITY AND ACCESS

Dr. Louis introduced the examiners' remarks. She emphasized that they were impressed by the efforts of the Dutch education system to address issues of equity. Nevertheless, the examiners felt that policies regarding equity and access were still in need of development. In particular, the examiners noted that the policy governing "freedom of choice" — the opportunity for each family to choose the school and educational programme of its preference — appeared to have conflicted with the development of effective policies addressing issues such as the integration of the increasing minority population, and the spiraling growth of special education.

Mr. Wallage began the Dutch delegation's remarks by noting that we are in a period of changing understanding about the role of education in ameliorating social problems. In the recent decades, lots of money and teacher work has been invested in trying to redress inequity, yet the effort has produced limited results, leading to a questioning of both what can be done, and how it should be done.

There is a pressing need to allocate money to specific, effective ways of dealing with equity problems such as those identified by the examiners. Because of the Dutch Constitution, there must be a national framework of policies that define what the government can do, particularly with regard to integrating minority children. Under all circumstances, guidance, not mandates, will be the strategy.

With regard to special education, the policy will be to move special education back to the regular school wherever possible, reintegrating the children concerned into normal classroom settings. There is a need for practical models as to how to do this, and experts are now developing a pilot programme to be available within months. This will also require the reallocation of resources and personnel back to the regular schools.

Dr. Ritzen emphasized that the position of the government is that all people need to have the same level of access to quality education. At the moment, choice works better for the well-educated parents: they have more information, and are better able to operate within the system. This is an inherent problem in choice systems. The question is, what will the government do about it?

First, information must be made more easily available. But the government is reluctant to move to easy output measures, such as test scores, that may not adequately reflect the quality of the school on the dimensions of concern to parents. There is a need to develop the role of the Inspectorate in order to achieve this objective.

Social renewal is a major theme of the policies of the new cabinet, which is emphasizing an integration of different social sector services in cities. "Steering at a distance" is not just a policy of the Education Ministry, but covers all social services. Thus, the cabinet's view is that addressing inequities is not a question of more money, but of more room for local institutions to work together more effectively. Knitting together the vast variety of local efforts to address issues of equity is not a job that can be performed effectively from The Hague. Similarly, education alone cannot bear all of the responsibility for increasing equity.

The delegate from Denmark remarked favourably on the comments of Dr. Ritzen, indicating that the Education Committee of the European Commission has a new initiative on the integration of special needs children into regular classrooms, increasing the need for sharing information and strategies between different countries. She pointed out, however, that integration into the regular classroom, in the Danish experience, does not create new economic efficiencies.

The delegate from Austria commented that the Netherlands seems to be much further developed in its policies regarding lingual minorities than was his own country, but that the Dutch still have the same problem that most of us have in developing a coherent policy with respect to assimilation. Countries still really hope that "they" will become like "us". He wondered whether there was any reality to the Dutch aspiration to educate for a multi-cultural society, and asked for an elaboration of the general vision of what might be part of this policy.

The delegate from Italy asked what role the government could play to increase integration in a system that is mostly private.

Dr. Ritzen responded that the questions of assimilation and integration needed to be treated separately. With regard to assimilation, the Netherlands has become an immigration country. The problems associated with this status should be high on the policy agenda.

There are many problems — for example, the problem of limited Dutch language ability is not just a problem for primary schools. Many students are arriving at later stages in their educational career, and their needs must be addressed within the education system. The Dutch policy emphasized linguistic assimilation as critical to ensure full social participation. This has to be balanced off against the problems of respecting the culture of newcomers.

Mr. Wallage elaborated on some of the assimilation issues facing the educational sector. He noted that "we have strict principles, but we have run into some difficulties". The principle is that immigrants who become permanent residents have the right of full participation in social affairs, but also have the right to their own identity. An acceptable balance between these has not been achieved at this juncture.

An example from the educational sector is that the minority teachers who instruct children in the mother tongue may not be fluent speakers of Dutch, and are thus not integrated fully into the education system. The minority groups do not see this as a problem, but the cabinet believes that minority teachers need to be integrated because the policy emphasized the teaching of minority languages as a vehicle for succeeding in Dutch schools. There are a few schools where the model of linguistic assimilation works well, but in most there are problems handling the transition at the point when the pupil can succeed in Dutch and in a regular classroom.

With regard to the creation of an education system for a multi-cultural future, efforts are just beginning. Multi-cultural educational training is becoming part of the curriculum in the teacher training programmes, but it is very abstract. Mr. Wallage agrees with the examiners that

the Dutch do not need to invent all of these programmes themselves, but may be able to borrow from the United States and Canada.

With regard to the question from the Italian delegate, Mr. Wallage reported that he was of the opinion that the time was close where the Dutch could not afford to end discussions about integration with reference to "the Constitution". Creating a more forceful positive social policy to promoted integration in schools cannot be solely the responsibility of the education Ministry, however, but will require co-operation of other ministries and social sectors as well.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr. Bodström concluded for the examiners by thanking the OECD, the Dutch government and the Education Committee for making the work of the group go smoothly. *Dr. Ritzen* commented that the report has already had, and would continue to have, an impact on Dutch educational policy. He returned to the point made at the beginning of the Examiners' Report regarding the persistence of unresolved educational problems in the Netherlands. Without being overly optimistic, he hoped that, at the next Dutch review, which would not occur for more than a decade, there would be a chance to conclude that the problems of the 1990s that were identified by the Background Report and the examiners were resolved through concerted policy action.

Part Three

SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT "RICHNESS OF THE UNCOMPLETED"

prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Netherlands

1. LAND AND PEOPLE

Geography and demography

With a population of 14.5 million and a surface area of 41 500 km², the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Basic industries, transport, commercial services and a highly developed agricultural and horticultural sector are the mainstays of prosperity in this open economy.

The composition of the population is changing significantly. In the late 1970s, the birth rate fell to approximately 180 000 per year, compared with some 240 000 per year ten years earlier. However, the growth in population is slowing down less quickly because of immigration. This leads to a growing ethnic and cultural diversity of Dutch society. In recent years the birth rate has again started to rise slightly, with the result that the population is ageing less slowly than was at first anticipated. Nonetheless, the ageing of the population is still a significant demographic phenomenon.

Economy and employment

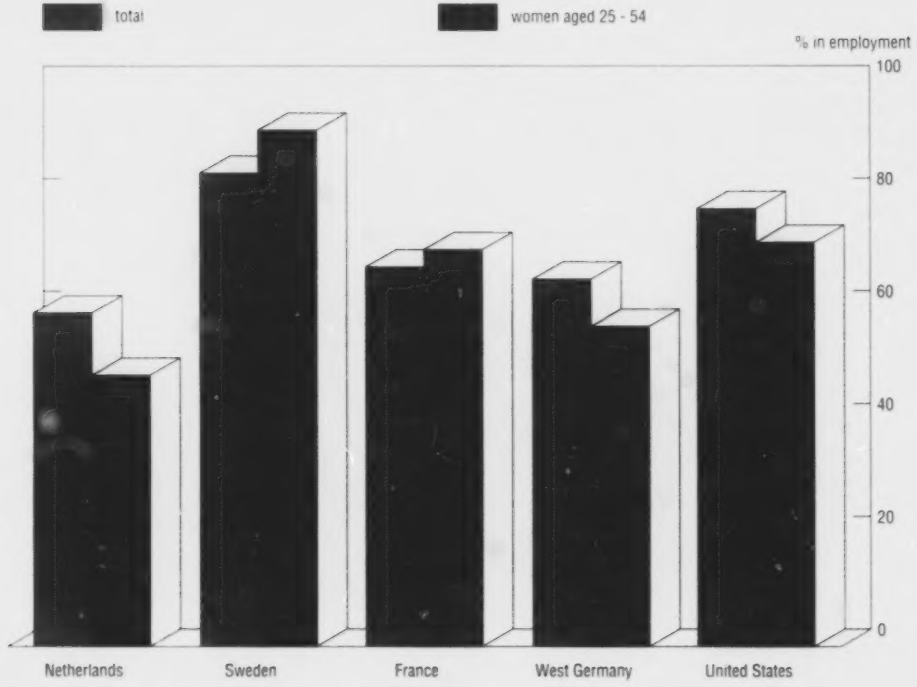
The export of goods (including natural gas) and services accounts for just over 50 per cent of GNP. As the "gateway to Europe", the Netherlands plays an important part in transit and distribution activities, and possesses the necessary infrastructure in terms of international trade and commercial services. The large multinational companies established in the Netherlands contribute to the international orientation of the country's economy.

Following a decline caused by the oil crises, the Dutch economy has picked up, both in absolute terms and compared with other countries. Company profits have improved and economic growth has been restored, thus making it possible to reduce the government budget deficit. The high rate of unemployment (13.8 per cent) is falling only slowly, despite a rise in the number of jobs available. The demand for people with a higher level of education is growing particularly rapidly. A disturbing social trend has been the development of a "hard core" of long-term unemployed with a low level of education. The decrease of the size of the younger generation over the next decade threatens certain sectors of the labour market with a serious shortage of trained staff.

Government

The Netherlands is a parliamentary democracy. The diversity of its population is reflected in the existence of a large number of political parties. The authorities — national and local — play a major role. The 12 provinces and 700 or so municipalities operate independently in many

Figure 1. **International comparison of levels of employment**



Source: OECD, *Employment Outlook*, September 1988.

fields. Municipal executives are the competent authorities responsible for publicly-run schools, but education policy is generally formulated at national level.

What is known as "compartmentalisation" — the pooling of social forces and interests along political and religious lines — is typical of administrative and social structures in the Netherlands, even today, although it has declined in significance since the 1960s. As a form of organisation it is, however, still clearly discernible in many fields, education being a striking example.

The extensive public sector has been criticised in recent years, *inter alia* because it is felt that the results of government regulation have been inadequate or undesirable.

Such criticism became louder with the economic recession, leading to a review of government responsibilities. This resulted in an emphasis on greater autonomy for educational establishments and a more "arm's length" approach by the government, increasing the role of intermediary organisations. However, delegating authority to lower levels of government is not in itself enough to reduce detailed government intervention.

Socio-cultural trends

General prosperity has improved steadily after a decline between 1980 and 1983. After a period of relative conservatism, public opinion has been characterised by cautious progressiveness. Optimism concerning the economic climate has risen again. Nonetheless, substantial sections of the population, such as those with a minimum income and the long-term unemployed, have not benefited from this increased prosperity.

The Netherlands has an extensive system of social security. Spending on benefits and the associated level of contributions are high in comparison with neighbouring countries. Arguments are being voiced in favour of coherence of rights and duties for students and young unemployed people as a means of reducing the latter's dependence on social security benefits.

Dutch society is becoming increasingly multi-racial. Migrant workers from Mediterranean countries and immigrants from former overseas territories have settled in the Netherlands, chiefly in the older districts of cities in the west of the country and in a number of industrial cities elsewhere. Their position in society gives cause for concern. Unemployment among people from these ethnic minorities is over 30 per cent and many have a low level of education. In some urban areas, schools have become segregated as a result. A striking feature of educational policy for ethnic minorities is the coupling of integration in Dutch society with support for the pupils' own cultural identity.

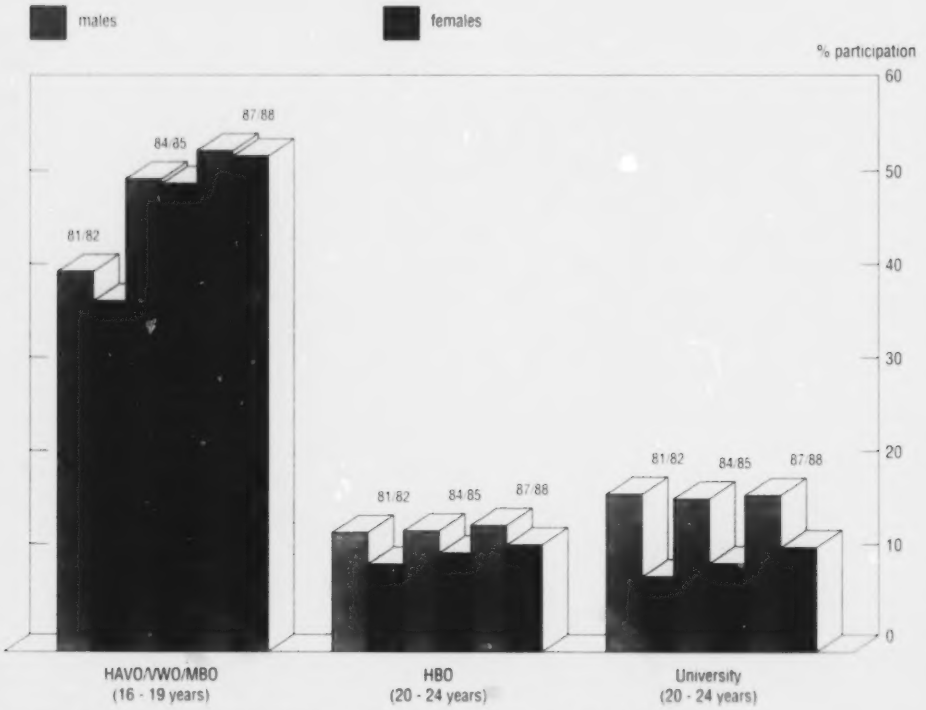
The participation of women on the labour market is considerably lower in the Netherlands than in other Western countries (see Figure 1). Women's economic independence has long been discouraged, partly by social security schemes and tax regulations. Girls are over-represented in the less academic types of secondary education, while in higher education they still tend to opt for disciplines which do not offer such good employment prospects. The authorities are encouraging girls to improve their prospects by means of publicity campaigns such as "Choose Science" (*Kies Exact*). The rate of participation of females in education is now increasing more rapidly than that of males. See Figure 2.

The general social trend towards "individualisation" is reflected, *inter alia*, in the system of financial aid to students. Instead of family allowance being paid to the parents, as used to be the case, a grant is awarded to all students aged 18 and over, sometimes supplemented by a loan. Individualisation has also led to greater emphasis on individualised teaching and the corresponding attention to individual needs and supervision. It has encouraged secularisation and a shift away from the division of society and organisation along confessional lines. In education, however, compartmentalised organisations continue to play a central role.

The functions of education

Education in the Netherlands has three key functions: to contribute to the education of pupils as individuals, to contribute to their social and cultural education as future citizens and to help prepare them to practise an occupation. The balance between these three functions may shift as a result of social and economic changes. After a period in which the stress lay primarily on vocational training, social and cultural aspects tend to receive more emphasis in policy-making.

Figure 2. **Percentage of males and females in HAVO/VWO/MBO and HBO and at university, 1980/81, 1984/85 and 1987/88**



Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science, calculations based on CBS statistics.

2. THE DUTCH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Historical development

Central government control of education in the Netherlands dates from the beginning of the 19th century. The first piece of educational legislation – the 1801 Elementary Education Act – sparked off a long-running dispute between the various denominations about the provision in the Act that education should be based on general Christian principles. Catholics and Protestants demanded their own schools where teaching would reflect their specific religious identity. The Liberals called for freedom of education for reasons which had nothing to do with

religion. Freedom of education was laid down in the 1848 Constitution, which stated that everyone was free to provide education within certain standards to be set by the government. However, the government did not at this stage assume responsibility for funding private schools. It was not until the 1917 Constitution that publicly-run schools and private schools were placed on a fully equal financial footing, in a settlement which was known as the pacification. From then onwards, the number of private schools increased considerably. At present there are nearly twice as many private as publicly-run schools in the Netherlands.

The number of children attending elementary schools rose steadily as the 19th century progressed. In 1900, legislation was enacted making school attendance compulsory between the ages of 7 and 12.

Secondary school education, which was originally a privilege for the few, expanded greatly after 1920 and underwent a spectacular increase after the Second World War, when the country's reconstruction called for skilled workers and highly qualified staff.

In the 1960s and 1970s, educational policy was designed to eliminate social inequality, by means of measures to remove financial barriers (grants for students) and by overcoming social and cultural obstacles. However, it has proved virtually impossible to eliminate the correlation between a child's social, cultural and economic background and his/her school career.

Until the Second World War, the government's responsibility for education was confined to financial and administrative matters. Post-war governments, on the other hand, attempted to bring about change and improvement from above. The limited success of this more constructive policy has led in recent years to a climate of opinion in favour of rolling back the frontiers of government.

Primary education

During the 19th century, more and more children attended elementary school. The introduction of compulsory schooling in 1900 merely confirmed a situation which already existed. Until the passage of the 1955 Nursery Education Act, central government bore no responsibility for nurseries, as distinct from primary education. The Primary Education Act of 1985 integrated nursery and primary schools, creating the new-style primary school.

Special schools cater for children who, owing to a handicap or to learning and behavioural difficulties, cannot keep up with the rate of progress in ordinary schools.

Secondary education

The secondary schools system distinguishes between general and vocational education. In the 19th century what is now called vocational education was provided by all manner of privately-run establishments, which were accorded official recognition by the 1919 Occupational Education Act. From then on, vocational education was available at both junior and senior secondary levels, originally for boys only, but after 1939 for girls as well.

The characteristics of the 1968 Secondary Education Act were greater co-ordination, greater scope for transferring from one type of school to another, and the shared first year, known as the transition class, which bridges the gap between primary and secondary education and links together the various types of secondary school. There are now two types of transition class, one for general and one for vocational education.

The debate on the structure of secondary education continued after 1968. The current proposals for a common curriculum in the first three years of secondary school are intended to enable pupils to postpone their final choice of subjects, promote individual development and provide

a broader education. The Basic Education Bill is based on the assumption that these objectives can be achieved without necessitating statutory changes in the existing structure.

Tertiary education

Until well into the 20th century no more than a small minority of the population attended university. The 1887 Higher Education Act embodied the ideals introduced in Germany by von Humboldt: learning was in essence one and indivisible and the teaching at a university should reflect that unity by embracing all disciplines.

The 1960 University Education Act stated that universities should engage in both teaching and research. Since 1982, universities have operated a two-tier system, comprising the first phase, the degree course lasting four years, and the second phase for a small number of post-graduate students.

In the 1960s and 1970s, higher vocational education, which was regulated by the Secondary Education Act, increasingly came to be regarded as a form of higher education. Its status as such was officially acknowledged with the passage of the 1986 Higher Vocational Education Act. Since that time, colleges of higher vocational education providing several courses at that level have been called *hogescholen*.

The support structure

Various forms of external support are available to schools. These activities include counselling, the provision of information, advice on teaching materials, organisational and curriculum development, educational measurement and research, and counselling for individual pupils. With the increasing institutionalisation of this field in the 20th century, numerous different services have come into being. The Education Support Structure Act, which entered into force in 1987, is intended to co-ordinate the various organisations.

Types of school

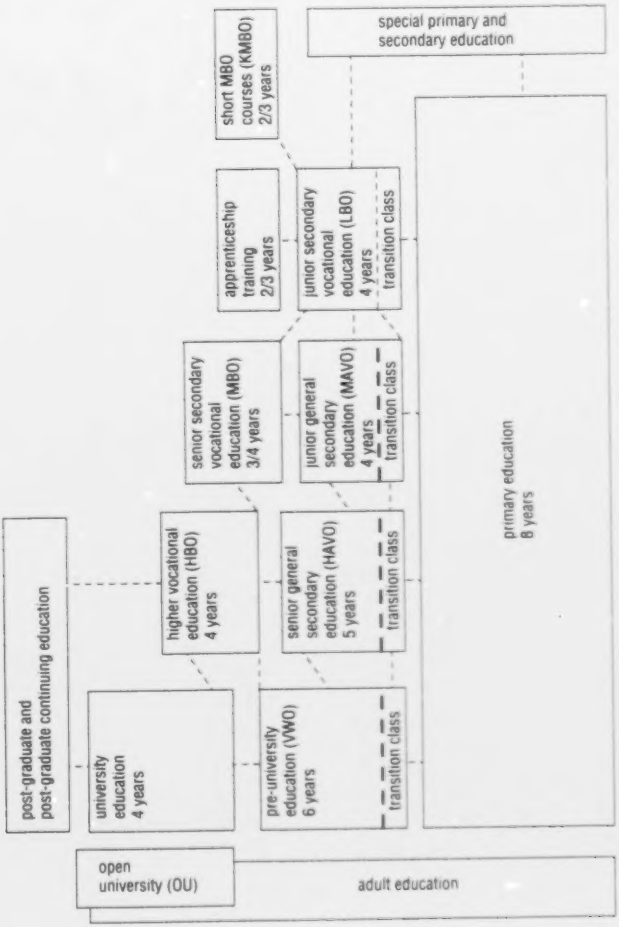
The Dutch education system

The Dutch education system (Figure 3) comprises: primary education (for children between the ages of 4 and 12); special primary and secondary education (for children with special needs between the ages of 3 and 20); secondary education (for pupils aged 12 to 20), divided into general and vocational education; higher education (from the age of 18), provided by universities, colleges of higher vocational education and the Open University, and adult education provision. A total of 3.4 million people participated in education of one type or another in 1986/87 (see Table 1).

Primary schools

Primary education allows pupils between the ages of 4 and 12 to follow an uninterrupted process of development, attuned to the rate of development of the individual pupil. Every two years, the competent authority of each primary school draws up the school work plan, which affords an understanding of the teaching objectives of the school, the choice of subject matter, the organisation of the school, and how pupils' progress is assessed. This plan is elaborated in the school's annual plan of activities.

Figure 3. **The Dutch education system today**


post-graduate and post-graduate continuing education
university education 4 years
higher vocational education (HBO) 4 years
senior secondary vocational education (MBO) 3/4 years
short MBO courses (KMBO) 2/3 years
apprenticeship training 2/3 years
special primary and secondary education
junior secondary vocational education (LBO) 4 years
transition class
junior general secondary education (MAVO) 4 years
transition class
senior general secondary education (HAVO) 5 years
transition class
pre-university education (VWO) 6 years
transition class
primary education 8 years
open university (OU)
adult education

Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science.

Table 1. **Pupils/students**

In thousands

	1975/76	1980/81	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88[c]
Full-time						
Nursery	519	410	399			
				1 469[a]	1 448	1 433
Primary	1 453	1 333	1 095			
Special	83	92	98	100	103	105
VWO/HAVO/MAVO	766	824	823	804	776	744
LBO	403	403	383	359	329	300
MBO	114	168	258	276	288	295
HBO	111	132	147	149	151	161
University	122[b]	149	159	159	161	165
Part-time						
VWO/HAVO/MAVO	33	107	110	104	101	
LBO	7	19	7	7		
MBO	142	167	174	189		
HBO	57	79	69	73		
University	4	8	10	11		
Correspondence	172	208	181	179	187	
Post-school			74	93	..	

a) New-style primary education [until 1984/85 primary education was divided into nursery education (for children aged 4 to 6) and old-style primary education (children aged 6 to 12)].
b) Including part-time students.
c) Provisional figures.
Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

Special primary and secondary schools

Special schools cater for children from the age of three upwards who, owing to a handicap or to learning or behavioural difficulties, require more help than ordinary primary and secondary schools can offer. The competent authority decides whether to admit a child to a special school on the basis of advice from a board of experts. Children may be admitted directly to a special school or referred from an ordinary school. There are various types of special primary and secondary school, each suited to the particular learning difficulties which children may encounter. The school work plan may be adapted to the needs of an individual pupil, the details being set out in an activity plan. The maximum age for special school pupils is 20 years.

Secondary schools

Secondary education follows on from ordinary and special primary education and caters for pupils from 12 to 18 to 20 years of age. There are two main branches of secondary education: general secondary and pre-university education, and vocational and prevocational education.

One of the aims of the 1968 Secondary Education Act is to facilitate the movement of pupils between the various types of school. Under the Act, therefore, two or more different types of school may form a combined school. After the transition class, pupils are referred to the type of school best suited to their needs and capacities.

Pre-university education (the gymnasium, the atheneum or the lyceum) prepares pupils for higher education in a course lasting 6 years. Senior and junior general secondary education (HAVO and MAVO) courses last for five and four years respectively. HAVO is primarily designed to prepare pupils for higher vocational education. After MAVO, pupils may go on to the fourth year of HAVO, take a senior secondary vocational education course (in its full-length or short form), join the apprenticeship scheme or attend part-time non-formal education. The junior secondary vocational education (LBO) course is prevocational in nature and lasts for four years. LBO schools are not intended to be the end of the line. Senior secondary vocational education (MBO) courses last three or four years.

Short MBO courses (KMBO), which have been available since 1979, are designed for pupils from LBO and MAVO schools who cannot find a suitable niche in senior secondary vocational education or the apprenticeship system. The courses, which are full-time and last two or three years, involve a great deal of practical training and train pupils for junior positions.

The apprenticeship system is a vocational training scheme which involves spending one or two days a week at school and receiving practical training for the rest of the week. Places are available to people aged 16 and over.

Part-time non-formal education embraces a complex of social and educational activities for young people who come under the compulsory part-time education ruling and must attend an educational institute for school-leavers two days every week. The aim of the courses is to further personal and social development.

Higher education

Higher education comprises higher vocational education, universities and the Open University.

Higher vocational education provides theoretical and practical training for a variety of occupations. The first phase, or undergraduate level, may last up to four years, the propaedeutic stage lasting no more than one year. The requirements for admission are a HAVO, VWO or MBO certificate. A restructuring process has recently taken place, creating new, larger establishments, the new colleges of higher vocational education (*hogescholen*), which are now permitted to conduct applied research.

The Netherlands has 14 universities, including the Open University. University education comprises training in the independent pursuit of scholarship and preparation for positions in the community for which a university degree is required. A university's key tasks are teaching, research and transferring knowledge for the benefit of the community (services to the community). The first tier or stage lasts for four years and leads to the *doctoraal* examination. Admission to university is possible with a VWO or HBO qualification or on passing an oral examination.

Because of the limited number of places available and the labour market situation, a decision is taken every year as to whether admission to certain courses should be restricted. Students are admitted to these *numerus clausus* courses by means of a weighted draw. There will be eleven courses subject to a *numerus clausus* in 1989/90.

The Open University, which started in 1984, offers distance learning courses at higher education level. There are no admission requirements other than a minimum age of 18. There are

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18 study centres throughout the Netherlands. Open University students are largely free to compile their own programmes of study and may study at home at their own pace. Teaching is done mainly by correspondence. University or HBO qualifications may be obtained in a number of disciplines.

Teacher training

Teacher training courses form part of higher education. Primary school teachers are trained at colleges of higher vocational education or colleges of education specifically for primary school teachers (PABOs). The courses, which last for four years, lead to a broad qualification. Every primary school teacher must be able to teach every subject taught in primary schools.

Secondary school teachers have either a grade "one" or a grade "two" qualification. Grade "two" teachers may teach the first three years of VWO and HAVO, and in MAVO, LBO and MBO schools. Grade "one" teachers are qualified to teach every age group in all types of secondary school. The full-time course for grade "two" teachers in general subjects, run by colleges of higher vocational education, lasts four years. Students specialise in one subject and may only teach their subsidiary subject at certain levels. Since 1979 there has been an experimental full-time course in technical subjects which lasts five years.

In order to obtain a grade "one" teaching qualification, it recently became necessary to take a one-year post-graduate teacher training course at a university after completing a university degree.

At present anyone who is qualified to teach in primary or secondary schools may also teach in special schools at the equivalent level. Shortly, however, it will become compulsory to take a two-year course over and above the HBO teacher training qualification.

Part-time teacher training courses for grade one and grade two teachers are also available at higher vocational education level.

Adult education

Adult education means all the activities and facilities designed to provide education and training for adults (i.e. people aged 18 and over). Adult basic education refers to activities that enable adults to acquire the minimum in knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to function on a personal level and in the community.

Evening and daytime classes are available in junior and senior general secondary education, pre-university education and senior secondary commercial education.

Adult vocational education encompasses educational provision for adults designed to lead to an occupational qualification. Adults may apply for training on their own initiative or at the suggestion of third parties, for example regional employment offices.

3. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE DUTCH EDUCATION SYSTEM

The freedom to found schools, to organise them and to determine the religious or other convictions on which they are based is laid down in the Constitution. This is why there is such a wide variety of schools in the Netherlands. They are divided into public-authority and private schools.

Freedom of education

Freedom of education means that groups of people have the right and the opportunity to found schools based on their own religious or ethical convictions or on their beliefs about society or education. The freedom of education is, however, subject to legal standards imposed by the Ministry of Education and Science governing the subjects taught and the level of school-leaving examinations.

Schools in the Netherlands

The four main categories are public-authority schools, private non-denominational schools and Roman Catholic and Protestant schools. A small number of Muslim and Hindu schools have been founded recently.

The number of competent authorities is consequently high (approximately 6 300). In the case of public-authority schools the competent authority is the municipality. Although some competent authorities in the private sector are responsible for a large number of schools, the majority run only one school.

Nonetheless, a large measure of uniformity exists. The certificates awarded by schools are valid everywhere. Rules relating to the combinations of subjects taken by pupils, the minimum time spent on each subject and examination syllabuses guarantee a certain similarity in the achievements of pupils moving into and out of the various parts of the system. Although some variations in standards do occur, they do not detract from the legitimacy of the certificates awarded.

The Netherlands has a large number of small schools, partly because of the compartmentalisation of society along religious lines.

Compulsory education

Compulsory education lasts for 12 years, from the age of five to the age of sixteen. Thereafter it is compulsory for young people to attend school for two days per week to the age of 18. The proportion of people participating in non-compulsory further or higher education is high.

Funding education

Regular (i.e. initial) education is funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, except for agricultural education which is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. These funds are derived from tax revenues and, to a limited extent, from school, course and tuition fees. Higher education establishments can earn income from teaching or research carried out on a contract basis. It will shortly be possible for secondary schools to provide teaching on a contract basis too.

Non-government-funded education also constitutes a sizeable sector, being paid for entirely by the participants, or their parents or employers. Government funds are allocated to regular education in accordance with certain conditions. Separate rules govern the funding of staffing costs, capital costs and running costs. Relevant factors include the number of pupils at the school, the average length of time for which pupils attend that type of education, class size and the teachers' salary scales. The "overspend" regulation, which stems from the financial equality of public-authority and private schools under the Constitution, means that if, in the course of a

particular school year, a municipality overspends on public-authority education, it must pay an equivalent amount to the local private schools.

There are two funding formulas: one whereby the amount given to schools is determined in accordance with general norms and one whereby actual expenditure is refunded in accordance with certain rules. The norm system affords greater freedom of expenditure and has gained ground in recent years.

Of the funds available to the Ministry of Education and Science for 1989, 21 per cent were earmarked for primary education, 5 per cent for special education, 22 per cent for general secondary education, pre-university education and junior secondary vocational education, 9 per cent for the rest of vocational education and adult education, 18 per cent for higher education and research, and 2.5 per cent for teacher training, the educational support structure, the inspectorate and general expenditure.

Students over the school-leaving age are expected to make contributions towards the cost of their education. In 1988/89 the school fees payable by secondary school pupils amounted to Gld 1 030 while tuition fees for HBO and university students amounted to Gld 1 400 and Gld 1 750 respectively. Course fees for day or evening classes depend on the length of the course. Financial assistance is available to ensure that no one is unable to participate in education for financial reasons. Young people up to the age of 17 may claim an allowance to help cover the costs of studying, the level of which depends on their parents' income. Students between the ages of 18 and 30 are entitled to financial support in the form of a basic grant to which all students are entitled and which is not repayable, and a supplementary loan and grant which are dependent on parental income. The maximum amount payable is based on the estimated costs that students are likely to incur in connection with living expenses and the cost of studying.

Legislation and regulation

The Dutch education system rests on a strong statutory foundation. Legislation is based on article 23 of the Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of education, and is consequently directed in particular at the funding and organisation of education.

Central government and the local authorities

Central government controls education by means of legislation and regulations. The management and administration of schools is decentralised. Central government's chief responsibilities lie in the spheres of organisation, funding, inspection, examinations and promoting innovation. The provincial authorities are charged mainly with supervisory duties, but also have a role in adult education. The municipal authorities are the competent authority for publicly-run schools and also perform a wide variety of executive duties, such as ensuring that compulsory education legislation is observed.

The consultative and advisory structure

External advisory bodies advise the Minister of Education and Science on the policies he should adopt. The Education Council makes recommendations on educational policy in general. Separate advisory councils exist for each sector of education as well.

The Minister discusses his policy plans with various consultative bodies comprising representatives of educational establishments, parents, staff and students.

The HBO colleges and the universities each have an organisation of their own for joint consultation, the Council on Higher Vocational Education and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU).

Education organisations

Organisations of interested parties exert influence on educational policy through various consultative bodies. There are four umbrella organisations, one for Catholic, one for Protestant, one for private non-denominational and one for public-authority schools, which represent parents' organisations, teachers' unions, school board organisations, organisations working in the field of part-time non-formal education for young adults and the educational advisory centres in consultations with the Minister of Education and Science and the State Secretary.

Every school is obliged to set up a participation council, on which parents and staff, and in some cases pupils are represented.

Conditions of employment

The legal status of teaching and non-teaching staff in schools and colleges of higher vocational education is regulated by the Legal Status (Education) Decree. This means that there is in fact very little difference in the legal status of staff in public-authority and private schools. Staff in education enjoy similar legal status to public servants. In 1985 a new salary system, the HOS (Education Staff Salary Structure Review) came into operation. This system is based on remunerating staff according to the post they hold rather than their qualifications, as was previously the case.

Primary school teachers normally work 40 hours per week. The standard weekly workload for secondary school teachers is 29 teaching periods. A teacher's work involves both teaching and non-teaching duties. Teachers who have been given extra duties, e.g. as careers officers or tutors, are partially released from teaching.

University staff are governed by a separate set of regulations based on those which apply to public servants but modified to take account of the specific circumstances in universities.

The support structure

The support organisations assist schools by systematically developing and improving the quality of teaching. The services provided relate to educational theory and teaching methods, subject content, educational psychology, school organisation and innovation. The Education Support Structure Act of 1987 distinguishes between general and specialised support organisations. The general support organisations include the school counselling services and the national educational advisory centres. The former may work for all the primary and special schools in the area they cover. Their role is to support the school as a whole and give guidance to individual pupils.

The bulk of the work of the three national educational advisory centres comprises counselling and development activities, evaluation, and providing advice and information for secondary schools.

The specialised support organisations include the Institute for Educational Research (SVO), the National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO) and the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO). There are also a number of bodies which provide support services for adult education.

Educational publishers

The production, distribution and sale of teaching materials is a commercial private sector activity. The Educational Publishers' Group (GEU) represents thirty publishing houses whose combined turnover (Gld 300 million) accounts for 90 per cent of the total market in educational publications in the Netherlands.

The Education Inspectorate

The inspection of education is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Science and is carried out by the Education Inspectorate. The duties of the Inspectorate are to keep up to date with developments, ensure compliance with statutory regulations, promote the development of education and report to the Minister, either upon request or on its own initiative. The Inspectorate for Higher Education is in addition responsible for organising and providing support for review committees in universities and colleges of higher vocational education in connection with self-evaluation.

The Inspectorate submits on its own responsibility an annual independent report on the state of education to Parliament. It is a decentralised body. As from 1 January 1990 it will have 14 regional offices, with a staff establishment of 500 full-time equivalent posts, 237 of which will be occupied by inspectors.

The Ministry of Education and Science

The Ministry of Education and Science is headed by the Minister of Education and Science, who is responsible for co-ordinating science policy as well as for education. At present the Minister is assisted by a State Secretary with special responsibility for primary and secondary education. The secretary-general is the most senior civil servant at the Ministry. Support services are provided by a number of general units, called "central departments", which together employ 888 staff (1 May 1989).

There are four directorates-general, responsible for primary education (176 staff), secondary education (448 staff), higher education and research (252 staff) and education and inspection services (651 staff) respectively. The latter is concerned with inspection, policy on conditions of employment, the educational support structure and teacher training. The Science Policy Directorate, with a staff of 60, is responsible for co-ordinating science policy. The duties of the *Informatiseringsbank* (Database Office), an autonomous unit based in Groningen, include the award and payment of student grants and loans. A total of 838 people work for the Office.

By 1990, staffing levels at the Ministry are to be reduced by 550 compared with the 1987 figure (i.e. 3 573).

4. AREAS OF CONCERN

If one regards education as a system, the following can be examined in turn: interaction between the system and its environment; the system itself (in which content and structure are distinguished); and management of the system. The latter can be subdivided to give consideration to developments in the field of "arm's length" or "hands off" government control, to teaching staff and to funding.

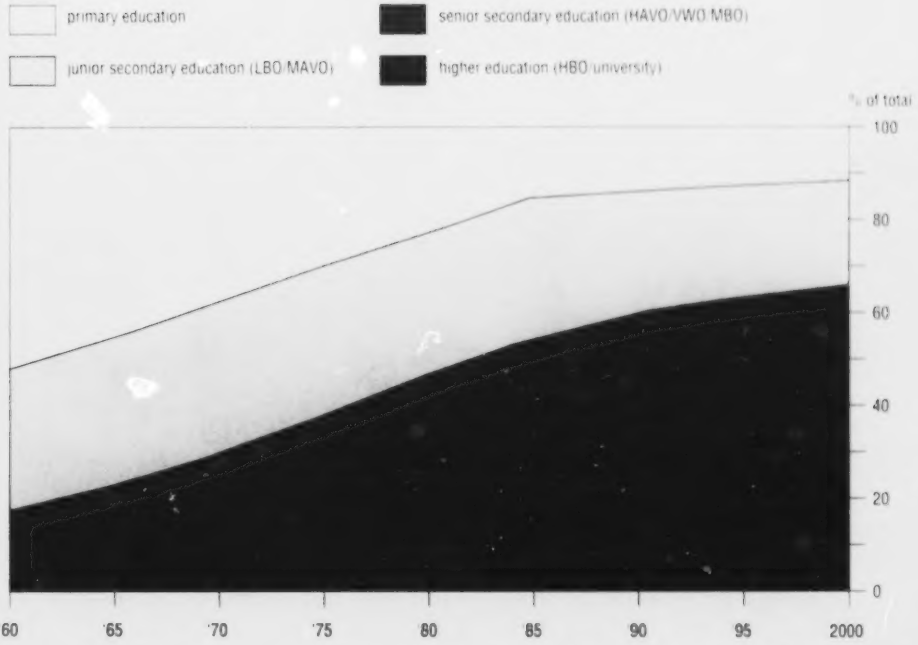
Education and the outside world

Introduction

Education fulfils certain essential functions in society. In an open and democratic society political priorities and decisions, whether in education or any other sector, are based on society's esteem of that sector. While it is understandable that in the austere financial climate of recent years, education has tended to be viewed from a socio-economic standpoint, its socio-cultural significance remains no less important. Nevertheless, the education world is also responsible for ensuring adequate matching of educational provision to labour market needs. The plans for closer harmonization of the policies on manpower services and education are intended to assist in this. The proposals mean that employers, trade unions and the government will bear joint responsibility for the planning of manpower services and the necessary training.

The knowledge intensiveness of Dutch society is increasing. The level of education of the Dutch workforce, which has risen considerably since the Second World War, will have to keep pace (Figure 4).

Figure 4. **Level of education of the Dutch population, 1961-2000**

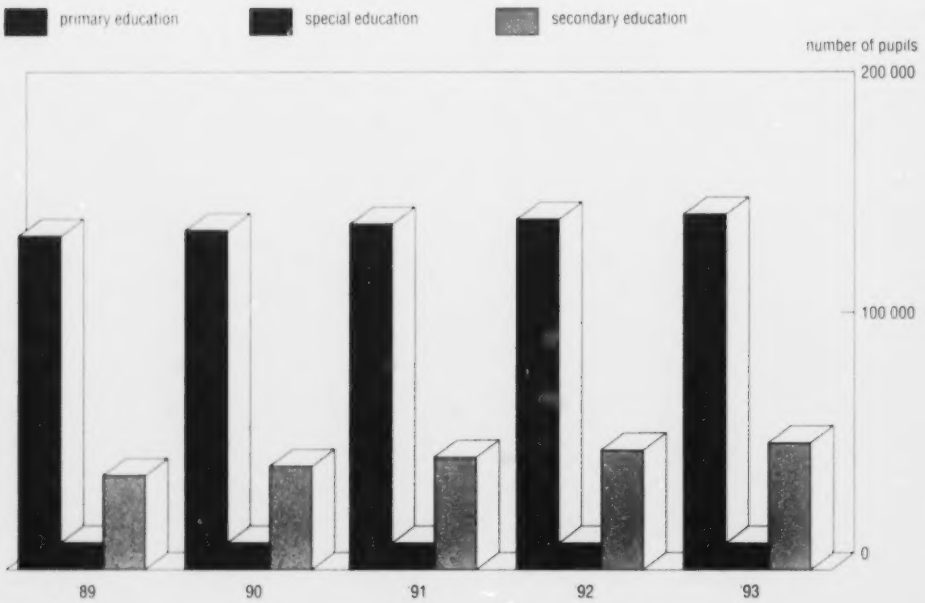


Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science, based on Education Matrices, CBS, 1967, 1971 and 1985; CPB projections 1986.

Growing internationalisation will further increase demand for highly qualified staff. The economic contribution made by Dutch industry is based not so much on natural resources — with the exception of natural gas, the country hardly possesses any — but rather on knowledge. Good education is essential for such knowledge.

A disproportionately high percentage of the less well educated feature among the unemployed and the figure is even higher among the long-term unemployed. It must be said, however, that demand for highly-qualified people can vary enormously from one field of study to another. Unemployment is highest among those with the lowest levels of education and among those with qualifications in the caring sector.

Figure 5. **Projected number of pupils of non-Dutch origin in Dutch education, 1989-1993**



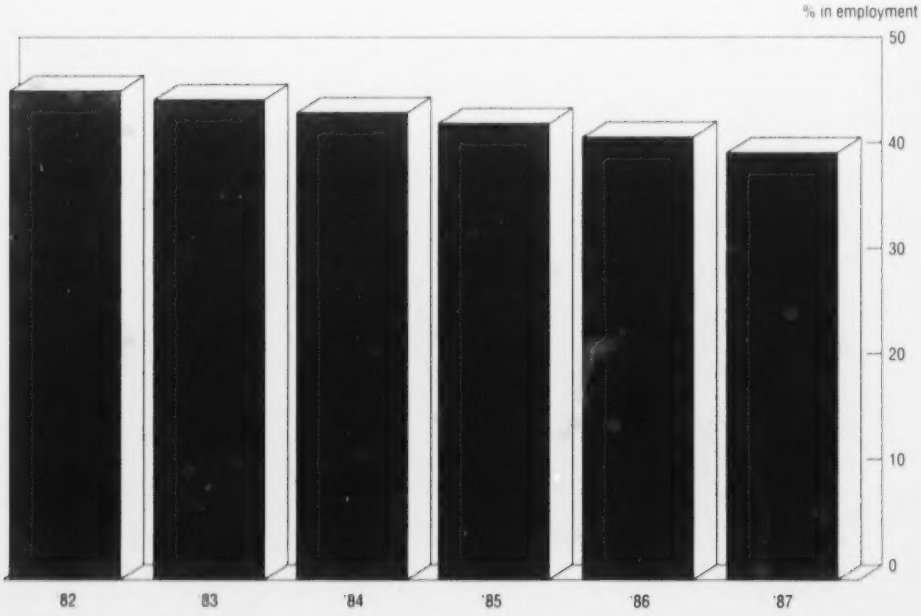
Source: CBS.

Demographic trends

The number of pupils is expected to increase slightly in the near future because the birth rate is rising again for the first time in some years. The increase will in fact be greater still because the numbers of pupils from ethnic minorities whose parents have emigrated to the Netherlands are continuing to rise (Figure 5).

Despite efforts to make education more widely accessible, inequality of educational opportunity between one social class and another continues to persist (Table 2). Children from lower social classes obtain poorer results at school, have less successful school careers, earn a lower income and obtain less attractive jobs.

Figure 6. **Percentage of 15 to 24 year-olds in employment, 1982-1987**



Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, *Labour market report*, 1988.

Table 2. **The school career of four generations, by parental background and sex**

Panel A. Intelligence quotient, type of secondary education recommended and choice of secondary school for the generation born around 1940 in the province of North Brabant

Occupational level of parents	Number	IQ above 110 %	Teacher's recommendation: MMS[a] VHMO[b] %	Choice of secondary school MMS[a] VHMO[b] %
Men				
Manual workers	635	25	8	5
Independent farmers	296	15	11	8
Independent entrepreneurs	229	41	20	15
Lower-paid non-manual workers	117	25	11	12
Intermediate non-manual employees	148	51	38	31
Senior employees	55	67	44	58
Other unknown	128	32	13	15
Women				
Manual workers	328	26	6	2
Independent farmers	207	24	10	4
Independent entrepreneurs	142	35	17	13
Lower-paid non-manual workers	88	35	17	8
Intermediate non-manual employees	93	45	36	20
Senior employees	33	63	55	53
Other unknown	76	31	22	10

Panel B. Educational attainment, type of secondary education recommended and choice of secondary school for the generation born around 1953

Occupational level of parents	Absolute number	Average total score in attainment test, last year at primary school %	Teacher's recommendation in 1965: MMS[a] VHMO[b] %	Choice of secondary school MMS[a] VHMO[b] %
Men				
Unskilled manual workers	92	4.11	5	4
Skilled manual workers	266	4.64	7	9
Farmers, market gardeners	93	4.58	16	19
Small business heads	130	5.20	17	19
Lower-paid non-manual workers	176	5.32	15	22
Intermediate non-manual employees	86	6.03	25	36
Senior employees	80	6.33	43	51
Women				
Unskilled manual workers	89	3.96	5	0
Skilled manual workers	283	4.44	6	6
Farmers, market gardeners	94	4.73	8	6
Small business heads	109	4.94	20	19
Lower-paid non-manual workers	185	5.31	21	17
Intermediate non-manual employees	82	5.79	32	28
Senior employees	79	6.27	53	48

a) Girls' secondary school.
b) Senior general secondary education (pre-1968).

Table 2. *(Continued)*

Panel C. Educational attainment, type of secondary education recommended and choice of secondary school after two years for the generation born around 1965

Occupational level of parents	Absolute number	Average total score in attainment test last year at primary school	Teacher's recommendation in 1977		Type of education in 1979	
			LBO	VWO HAVO	LBO	VWO HAVO
			%	%	%	%
Men						
Unskilled manual workers	18409	33.5	61	12	67	8
Skilled manual workers	21355	38.0	43	22	49	16
Small business without employees	9370	38.6	43	22	50	17
Small business with employees	6213	41.1	30	30	38	21
Lower-paid non-manual workers	12618	41.7	24	38	28	28
Intermediate non-manual employees	19755	44.2	17	47	23	37
Senior employees	11059	46.5	10	59	15	48
Other	24640	35.1	52	20	57	14
Women						
Unskilled manual workers	16153	34.5	48	14	52	10
Skilled manual workers	19919	38.8	33	24	37	19
Small business without employees	8600	39.1	31	24	36	21
Small business with employees	5608	41.2	20	35	25	29
Lower-paid non-manual workers	12639	41.4	21	36	24	29
Intermediate non-manual employees	19047	44.3	15	47	17	41
Senior employees	11021	47.3	5	61	7	53
Other	24227	35.3	45	20	48	14

Panel D. Educational attainment, type of secondary education recommended and choice of secondary school for the generation born around 1970[a]

Occupational level of parents	Absolute number	Average total score in CITO test in last year at primary school	Teacher's recommendation		First choice of secondary school	
			LBO	VWO	LBO	VWO[b]
			%	%	%	%
Men						
Manual workers	2463	2.65	46	8	45	12
Independent business without employees	514	2.94	42	10	41	14
Independent business with employees	354	3.08	28	11	26	18
Lower-paid non-manual workers	884	3.09	28	14	27	23
Intermediate non-manual employees	1367	3.35	15	23	14	32
Senior employees	909	3.55	10	32	8	44
Other	1885	2.72	30	15	44	14
Women						
Manual workers	2386	2.69	35	8	34	12
Independent business without employees	446	2.94	21	10	21	18
Independent business with employees	380	2.97	23	13	21	23
Lower-paid non-manual workers	924	3.00	19	17	17	22
Intermediate non-manual employees	1401	3.25	10	23	9	33
Senior employees	905	3.45	7	31	6	47
Other	1995	2.61	38	9	36	14

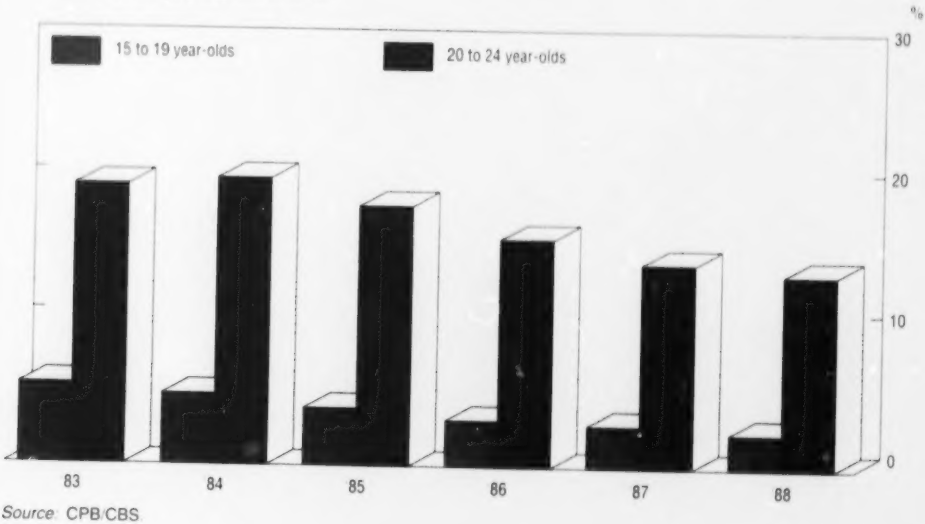
a) Based on the cohort studied in "School careers and origin of pupils in secondary education", ICBS circular 7833, May 1985 and subsequent publications.

b) Includes VWO school and transition classes leading either to VWO or HAVO.

Source: J. van Kemenade *et al.*, *System and Policy*, 1986.

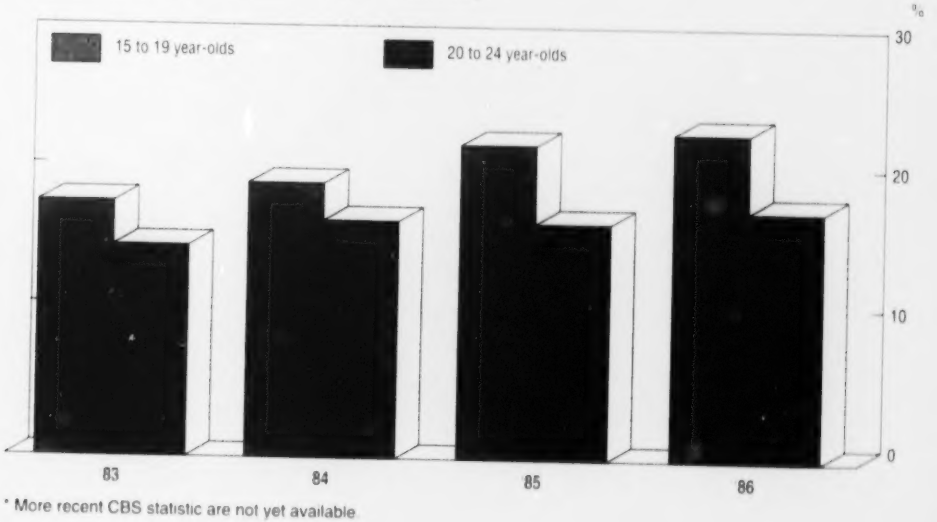
Figure 7. **Percentage of young people aged 15-19 and 20-24 out of work and percentage of young people in these age groups in MBO or HBO or at university**

Percentage of age group out of work



Source: CPB/CBS

Percentage of age group in MBO or HBO or at university*



* More recent CBS statistic are not yet available

Source: CBS

1 9

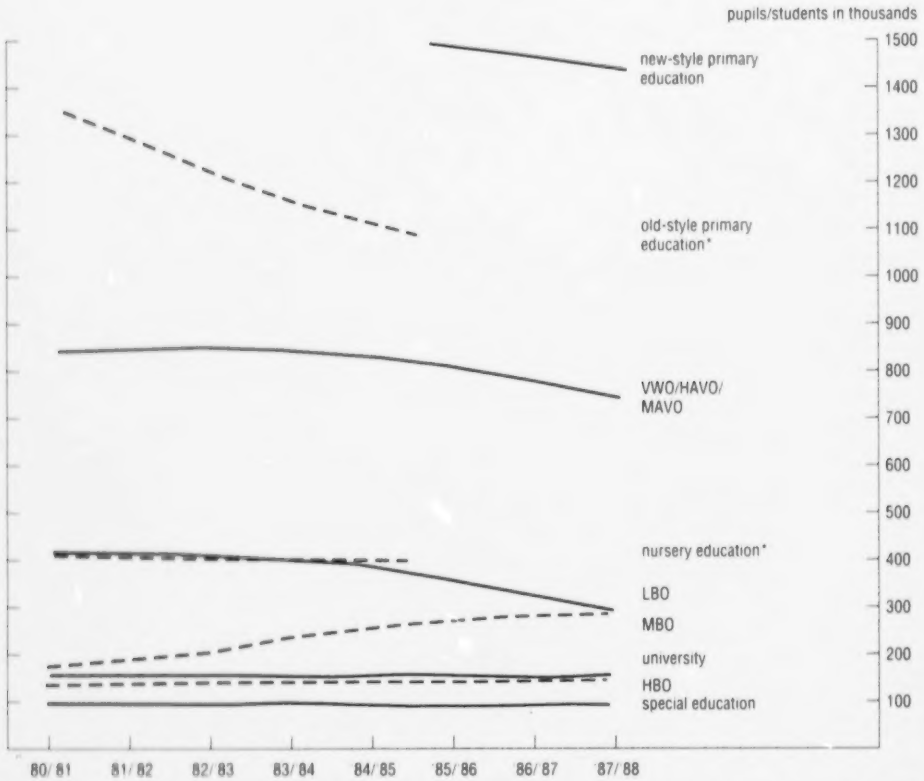
Overview of educational participation

The total number of participants in full-time education in 1985 was 3.3 million (Figure 8). If participants in part-time education are also taken into account, the total amounts to 3.9 million.

Primary education

The number of pupils in primary education is increasing slightly again after a steady decline in recent years. The number of pupils referred from primary education to special education has increased considerably. The rise in the number of pupils going on to general secondary schools or pre-university schools has been at the cost of junior secondary vocational education.

Figure 8. **Number of pupils in full-time education, 1980-1987**



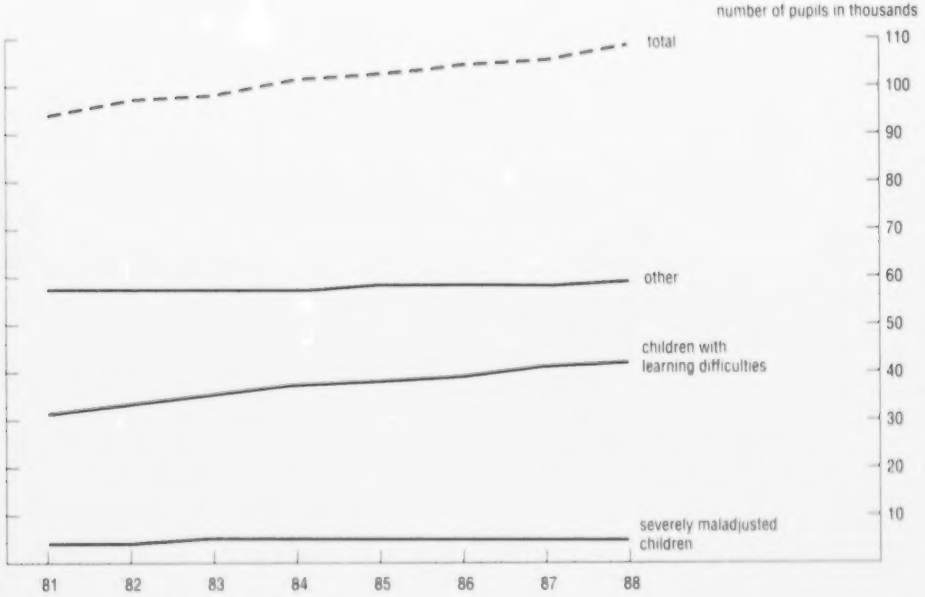
* As of 1 August 1985 nursery education and the old-style primary education have been combined in the new-style primary schools.

Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science, and CBS.

Special education

The growth in special education is concentrated in schools for children with learning and behavioural difficulties and for severely maladjusted children (Figure 9a). The number of boys in special education is more than double that of girls. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils from ethnic minorities (Figure 9b).

Figure 9a. **Number of pupils in special primary and secondary schools**

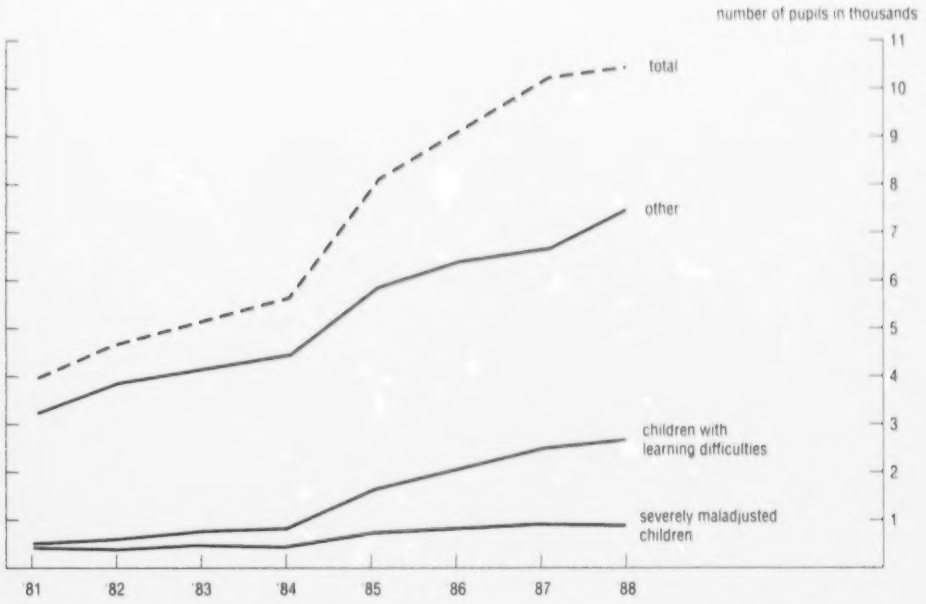


Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science.

Secondary education

Participation in general secondary education and pre-university education has dropped in recent years as a result of demographic trends. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of pupils than previously goes on from primary education into general secondary education (Figures 10 and 11). There has been a sharp drop in the number of pupils in junior secondary vocational education, which is increasingly regarded as a last resort. Senior secondary vocational education constitutes a growth sector which has more than doubled in size since 1975.

Figure 9b. **Number of special school pupils from ethnic minorities**
(pupils with a non-Dutch background)

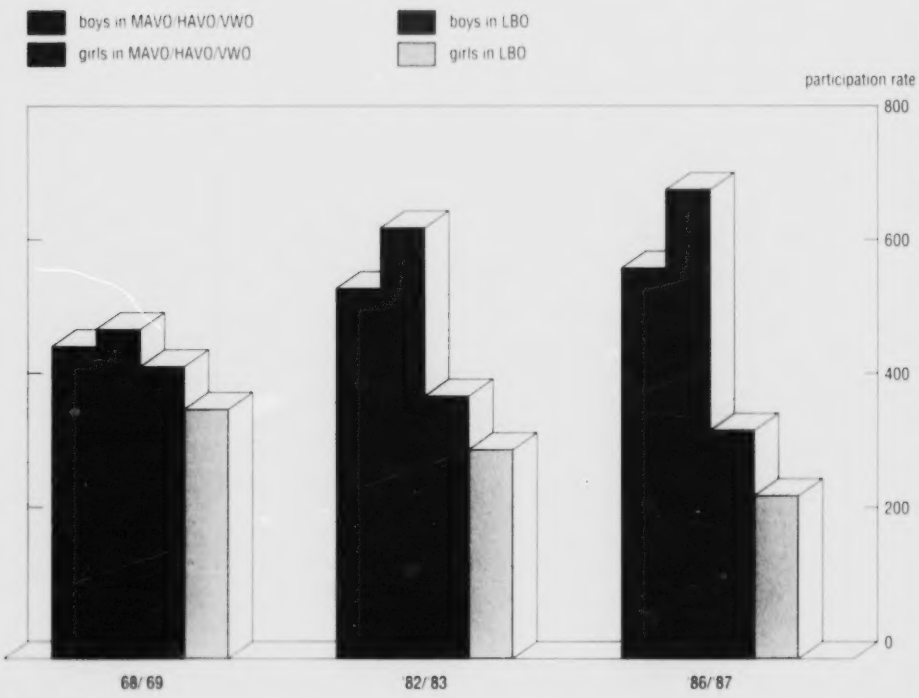


Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science.

There has been an increase in the number of pupils leaving full-time secondary education without any qualifications (Figure 12). Some of these pupils go on to part-time education and so still obtain qualifications. This is more particularly true of the junior secondary vocational education leavers than of general secondary and pre-university school-leavers. It is difficult for unqualified school-leavers to find employment.

Many of those qualifying from pre-university education and senior general secondary education experience difficulties in higher education because of an inappropriate choice of subjects. The interface between senior general secondary education and higher vocational education is problematical and the percentage of senior general secondary school-leavers among the higher vocational education intake has therefore fallen.

Figure 10. **Number of 14 year-olds in general secondary education, VWO and LBO per 1 000 pupils in this age group**



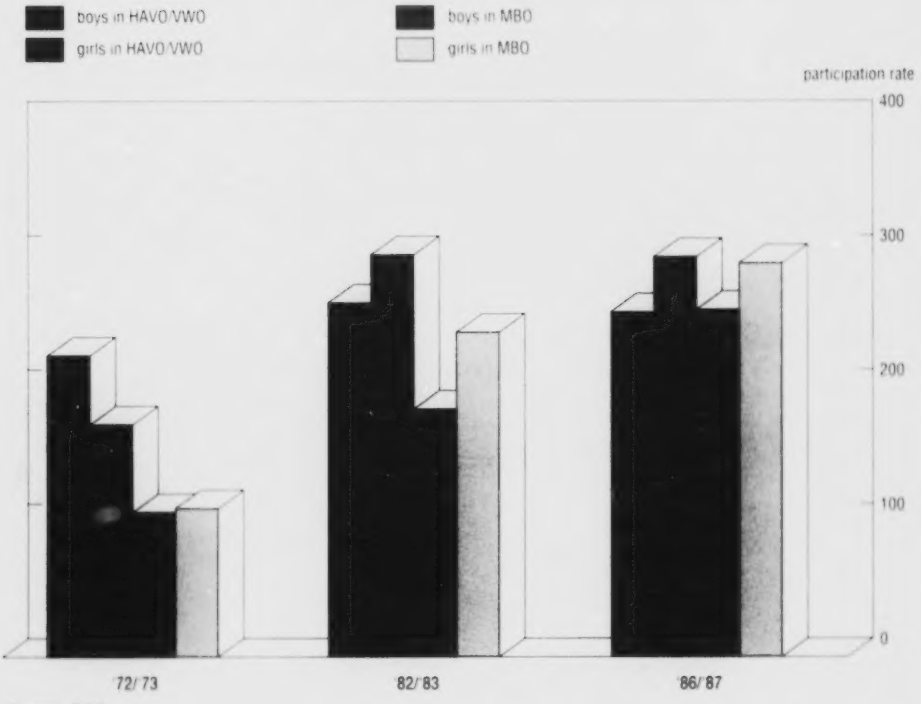
Source: CBS

Higher education

The intake of students into higher education is drawn primarily from senior general secondary schools and pre-university schools. In the case of higher vocational education, this also includes students with senior secondary vocational education qualifications. The number of students leaving these kinds of school will drop in the years ahead (Figure 13). This is a matter of concern.

Participation in higher education has increased considerably in recent decades (Figure 14). A projected decline in student numbers has so far failed to materialise.

Figure 11. **Number of 17 year-olds in the upper tier of general secondary education, VWO and in MBO per 1 000 pupils in this age group**



Source: CBS

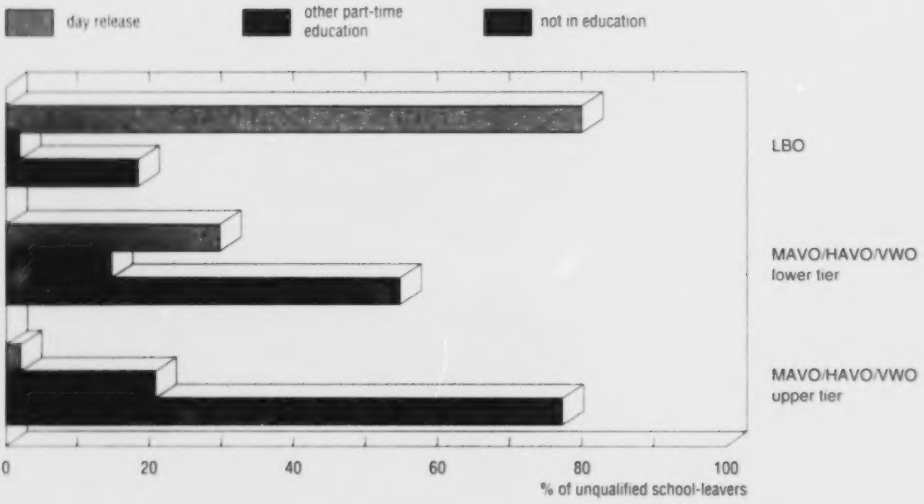
The percentage of women students in higher education has increased considerably. However, this is particularly true in sectors in which there are fewer employment opportunities.

The median duration of study at universities has dropped from 7.2 to 5.4 years.

The rate of unemployment among graduates is only half that among the Dutch workforce as a whole. A growth in the demand for graduates is expected in the near future. Some scenarios anticipate labour shortages, particularly in technical and economic disciplines.

The Open University is still in the process of establishing itself. By 1988 the number of courses had increased to 67. The number of students went up in the same year to 44 603. Approximately 20 per cent of them would like to obtain Open University qualifications. More men than women study with the Open University. About half the students are aged between 25 and 35.

Figure 12. **Percentage of pupils leaving full-time general secondary education, VWO and LBO without qualifications, broken down according to destination**



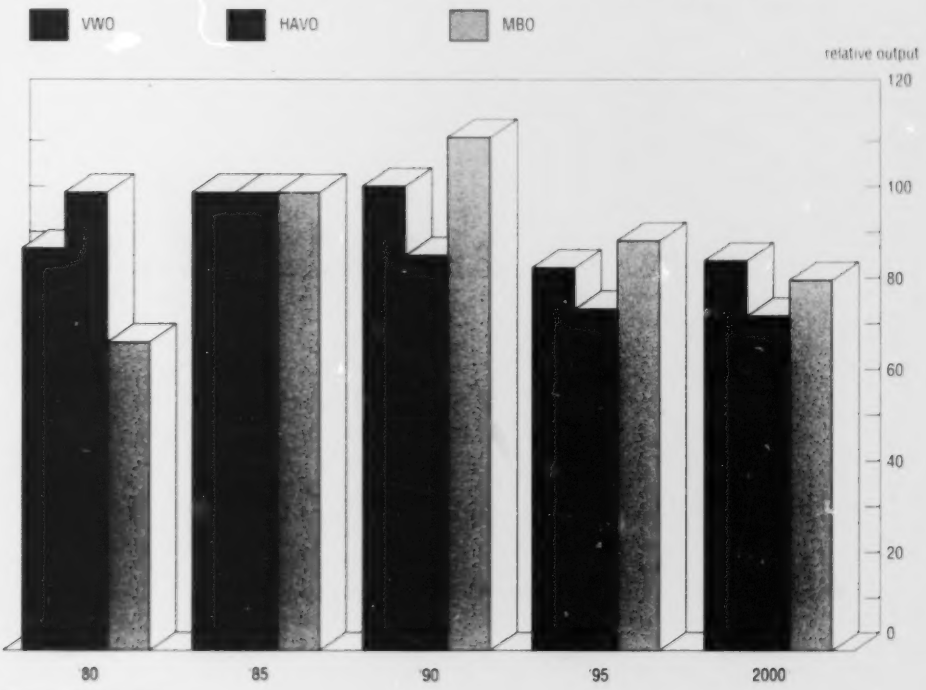
Source: CBS (1987); Education Matrix 1985.

The number of students who already have a higher education qualification is strikingly high; the majority of students are in paid employment.

Non-government-funded education

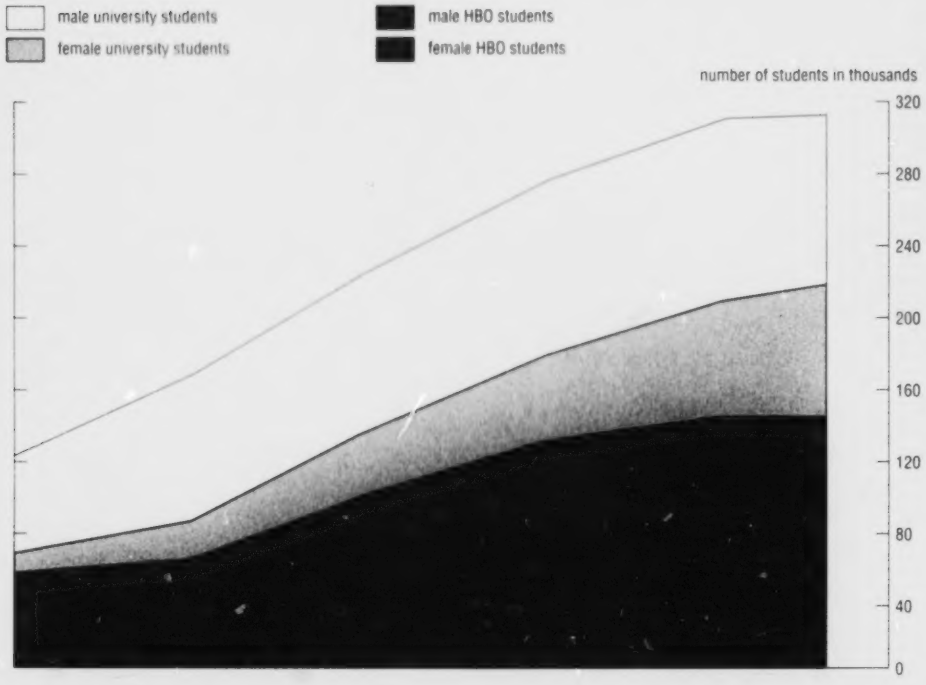
Limited information is available on education which is not publicly funded. The little which is available shows, however, that it is a large sector. A total of some 187 000 people followed correspondence courses in 1986. In the same year at least 80 971 people took part in post-school face-to-face education. The number of participants on industrial training courses in 1986 was 761 800, while some 41 000 followed some form of post-graduate education after the first "tier" of higher education.

Figure 13. **Pupils leaving HAVO, VWO and MBO, 1980-2000 (1985 = 100)**



Source: CPB estimate.

Figure 14. **Number of students in full-time higher education, 1965-1988**



5. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: STRUCTURE AND CURRICULAR ASPECTS

The core of any education system is formed by the body of educational establishments and by the curricula provided by those establishments. Developments in numerous areas are leading to adjustments to the curriculum and to discussions of whether the structure of the education system is the most appropriate vehicle for that curriculum.

Main themes relating to the curriculum and the structure of education

The first theme relates to the most appropriate curriculum content for pupils up to the age of fifteen or sixteen if they are to obtain a good start for further study and participation in society.

The second theme concerns the impact on the curriculum and the structure of the education system of developments in the pupil population. Four categories are distinguished which require attention: pupils from less advantaged social classes, girls, ethnic minorities (minority language and culture teaching but also intercultural education for all pupils) and pupils whose physical, mental or social handicaps impair their learning ability. The third theme concerns the modification of curricula and structure in response to the needs of subsequent stages of education and society. The fourth theme is evaluation. The demand for information on the extent to which education achieves its objectives is growing, largely because of increasing interest in the quality of education.

Focus on specific target groups

a) Educational priority policy (OVB)

Educational priority policy aims to combat the educational disadvantage which has been found to exist in practice, the focus being on pupils' socio-economic background and ethnic origin. There are three instruments in use: policy on school resources, educational priority areas policy and support in the form of the provision of advice and information, curriculum development and training (including in-service training). Under the policy on school resources staffing levels can be raised to cater for educationally disadvantaged or potentially disadvantaged pupils. The educational priority areas policy means that extra money can be channelled into areas where there are a lot of educationally disadvantaged pupils for use in joint projects involving schools and welfare organisations.

Initial assessments show modest success in combating educational disadvantage. However, a number of problems still exist. For example, some schools in certain parts of the major cities are known as "black schools" because most of their pupils come from ethnic minorities.

b) Minority language and culture teaching

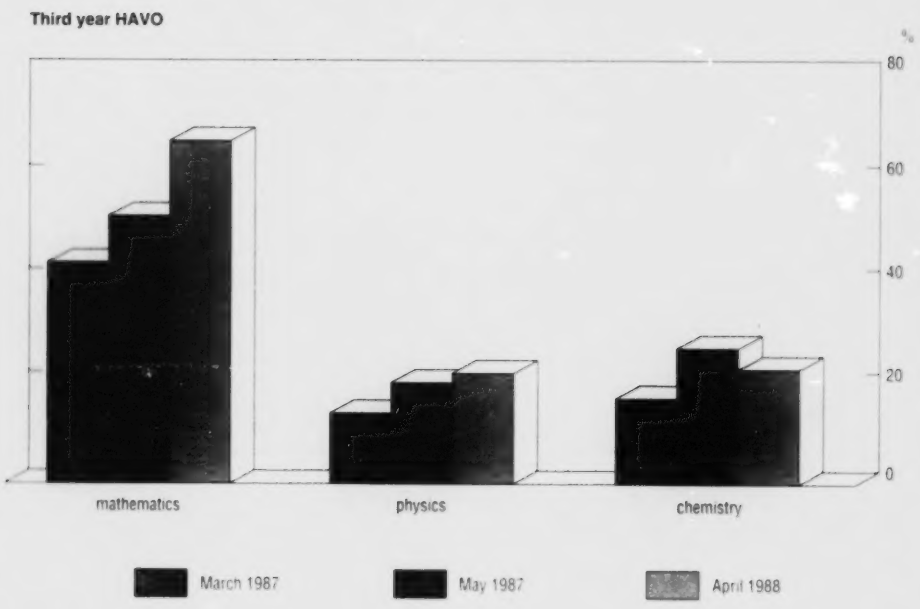
In both primary and secondary education pupils from ethnic minorities may be offered instruction in their own language and culture, partly in addition to and partly in place of the ordinary curriculum. There is, however, an increasing tendency on the part of some to think that such teaching interferes with school careers.

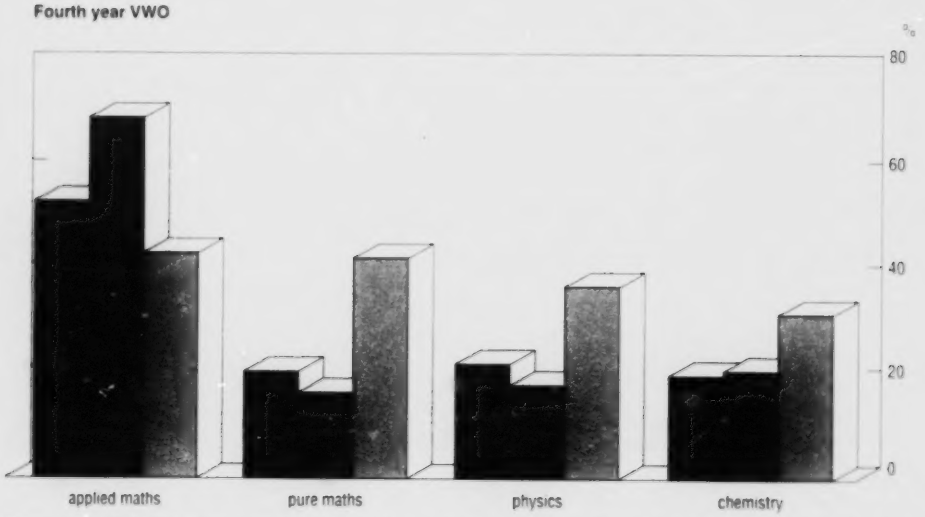
Minority language and culture teaching faces a number of problems in practice, notably insufficient integration into the normal curriculum and a shortage of trained teachers. Moreover, pupils often miss part of the standard curriculum.

c) Catering for a wider range of educational needs (zorgverbreding)

Policy on catering for a wider range of educational needs stemmed from increasing interest in the individual differences between pupils. The objectives are to provide a satisfactory education in ordinary schools and to reduce the number of referrals to special education. This policy has chiefly been pursued through the improvement of teachers' diagnostic and remedial skills. Despite all the efforts that have been made, the intake into special education has increased considerably in recent years.

Figure 15. **Percentage of girls intending to take mathematics**





Source: Report by the Dutch Institute for Public Opinion Survey and Market Research (NIPO) on the "Choose Science" campaign, July 1988.

d) Girls

There is a considerable difference in the school careers of boys and girls. The reasons for this are unclear. At primary school, girls do better than boys but at secondary level the roles are reversed: girls do not participate in education as long as boys, and fewer of them go on to higher education. Although more girls are now following higher education, they are heavily under-represented in technical and science subjects.

Despite a number of initiatives on the part of the government, efforts to promote equal opportunities remain optional. The "Choose Science" campaign, which is intended to encourage pupils, particularly girls, to include mathematics and the exact sciences among their final examination subjects, appears to be successful. Since the start of the campaign more girls are choosing these subjects (Figure 15). Boys already did so to a far greater extent than girls.

Information technology

The aim of the Information Technology Promotion Plan was to introduce information technology in all sectors of education. Activities included the provision of hardware, the development of software and courseware, the training of teachers and the development of expertise among staff. A more permanent basis has now been established for these activities. These developments are to a large extent concentrated in vocational education.

Quality of education

The government has a special task with regard to the quality of education, which is monitored by the Inspectorate. Since the beginning of the 1980s the emphasis on quality has increased. The quality of education can be measured according to the extent to which it succeeds in realising the three aims of education, namely, equipping young people for their role in society, equipping them for working life and contributing to their personal development. In recent years the government has strongly concentrated on the drafting and elaboration of quality standards (attainment targets) and the development of quality control instruments.

Primary and special education

Innovation in primary education

The desirability of introducing the new-style primary school was indicated by schools themselves where it was felt that the existing system of separate nursery and primary schools was too rigid. The Primary Education Innovation Committee advised in 1978 that experimental projects be carried out, and in 1985 the new-style primary schools became a fact. A restricted project policy is now being pursued in order to help solve problems which have been identified. Innovation in primary education is being supported through implementation programmes, in-service training and counselling, most of which is in the hands of the national educational advisory centres.

Curriculum development has proved to be a task best left to advisory centres and university institutions. The ready-made implementation programmes they develop can then be adapted by schools to their specific needs.

Achievement of objectives in primary education

The Primary Education Act states that education should allow pupils to follow an uninterrupted process of development, that it should be geared to the all-round development of the individual and that it should take into account the fact that pupils are growing up in a multicultural society. The progress made in achieving the objective of an uninterrupted process of development is still far from satisfactory. Only 35 per cent of schools work with forms of differentiated and individualised teaching, both of which are necessary tools for achieving this goal. Furthermore, nursery education in practice still constitutes a separate kind of education. Many schools have still not effectively integrated nursery and primary teaching. As far as all-round development is concerned, modest progress has been noted in broadening the range of the curriculum. A number of new subject areas have been introduced. Innovation is most widespread in the fundamental subjects such as Dutch, English and arithmetic/mathematics. It is possible to discern a tendency away from a focus on social and emotional facets and back to an emphasis on cognitive aspects.

The consequence of the premise that pupils are growing up in a multi-cultural society is intercultural education. The implementation of intercultural education is difficult but there is broad agreement on its importance.

Special education

There are separate special schools for children who are unable to attend ordinary schools because of physical, mental, social or emotional problems. The number of different kinds of special school has increased in recent years. The number of pupils has also risen sharply, most of them having social and/or emotional problems. Children with physical handicaps have been integrated into ordinary schools to an increasing extent. The Special Education Interim Act was introduced in 1985. It contains many provisions similar to those contained in the Primary Education Act as it aims to encourage transfers from special to ordinary schools.

Research to determine the causes of the increase in the number of pupils in special schools, which is undesirable for both educational and financial reasons, revealed a number of reasons: inflexible curricula in primary education, lack of motivation among teachers, the fact that special schools are losing their stigma, and the fact that the balance between the children's potential and abilities, the expectations and demands which they face and the support they receive at home and at school has been disturbed. The increase is in any event not due to increased learning difficulties among children. It is a socially-determined process. Improving the way in which children are brought up at home is perhaps one of the most obvious ways of dealing with the problem. The Minister of Education and Science has recently decided to freeze staff numbers.

Quality control policy and evaluation in primary education

Schools want more guidance on how to determine the content of the curriculum. Moreover, secondary schools want some degree of uniformity in the knowledge and skills which pupils acquire at primary school. The Minister of Education and Science has therefore proposed the introduction of attainment targets. These attainment targets will indicate the goals to be pursued and will not be linked to central assessment.

One way of raising standards is to amend the school work plan. The functions of a school work plan are threefold: it provides schools with a means of accounting for the education they provide, it is a guide for teaching in the school and it is a means of investigating how the education provided can be improved.

Assessment studies — investigations into the education provided and the level of achievement — can also assist in quality control. In primary education each subject is assessed once every eight years. The results may prompt the government to intervene. Schools can also compare their own results with the national figures and make their own adjustments. Assessment studies have not been in operation long enough for conclusions to be drawn from them.

Both educational priority policy and the progress made in the new-style primary schools are subject to evaluation studies.

Secondary education

The different types of education are still too separate from one another despite the restructuring of secondary education which took place in 1968. It remains difficult to transfer from one type of school to another and transition classes have not succeeded in bridging the gap between general secondary education and vocational education. In the case of senior secondary vocational education the rigid and detailed rules have acted as a strait-jacket with the result that it cannot gear itself sufficiently to labour market needs. Policy is therefore geared to increasing cohesion in the first stage of secondary education and to facilitating greater flexibility and differentiation in the second stage.

General developments

In 1975, after a period of extensive debate between the advocates and opponents of the idea of education as an instrument of social reform, the then Minister of Education and Science proposed the introduction of comprehensive education (*middenschool*), i.e. one type of school for all pupils between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Differences between pupils were to be catered for through differentiation within the classroom. All pupils were also to be taught the same subjects. After a quite passionate debate fifteen experimental *middenscholen* were set up. A period of deadlock followed until 1986 when the Advisory Council on Government Policy published a report on basic education.

According to the Council, basic education should provide individuals with a core on which they can build for the rest of their lives by acquiring new knowledge and skills. This means that it should provide a knowledge of basic structures, including that of an analytical and abstract nature, the ability to use that knowledge, and insight into the socio-cultural environment, i.e. the ability to orient oneself in a complex environment. Basic education should prepare individuals for a role in society, for a career and for further education. The Council's report shifted the emphasis in the discussion from the structure of education to its content. The bill on basic education submitted by the government has largely adopted the suggestions put forward by the Council. The main elements of the bill are:

- the introduction of attainment targets in primary education and in basic education in secondary schools;
- the introduction of three years of basic education in all existing secondary schools;
- a core curriculum accounting for 80 per cent of teaching time and covering fourteen subjects which all pupils have to take;
- scope for schools to determine how they wish to use the remaining 20 per cent of teaching time.

The bill is currently going through Parliament and consultations and discussions are taking place on the draft attainment targets for primary education.

General secondary education and pre-university education

Because pupils' current choice of subjects at secondary school is giving rise to problems in further and higher education, all pupils, but particularly girls, are being encouraged to take mathematics and science subjects. It will also be compulsory to take two foreign languages and, in senior general secondary schools and pre-university schools, mathematics.

All secondary school pupils will have to take one more examination subject than is the case at present. Philosophy and social studies are to be introduced as examination subjects in an attempt to achieve a more balanced combination of examination subjects.

Computer and information literacy has been introduced voluntarily in almost all schools while special projects are being conducted to determine whether information technology should be taught as a separate subject for one or two hours a week in the intermediate years of senior general secondary education and pre-university education.

In this connection a system is being sought for translating developments in science and technology for use in the classroom. Technology is to be introduced as a compulsory subject in junior secondary vocational education schools and a non-compulsory one in general secondary schools and pre-university education.

Language teaching is changing. New languages are being introduced; these include those spoken by the ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands but Spanish and Russian are also taught at many schools.

Vocational education

A special characteristic of education in the Netherlands is that pupils leaving primary school at the age of twelve are able to choose between vocationally-oriented education and general secondary education. By choosing vocational education at the age of twelve pupils are to a large degree determining the further course of their school careers. The transition period in secondary education has done little to change this. Junior secondary vocational education is increasingly being seen as a last resort. It is still the sum total of schooling which many pupils receive, even though it does not adequately equip them for the labour market. The number of pupils in junior secondary vocational education has dropped more than proportionally in comparison with the rest of secondary education. The introduction of basic education may improve this situation. Proposals have also been made to reinforce the prevocational nature of this type of education in conjunction with the introduction of basic education. Junior secondary vocational education will then be known as prevocational education. It will not lead to vocational qualifications but will lead on to other forms of education.

Links with the labour market must be improved. Periods of practical training are therefore to be introduced in junior secondary vocational education. Short courses are also to be introduced for those with junior secondary vocational qualifications who cannot find a job.

The number of pupils in senior secondary vocational education is rising but it faces a number of problems: lack of flexibility, outdated subject matter, the fact that there are a great many schools, some of them very small, and staff shortages. Detailed legislation and regulations hamper the search for solutions. It was therefore decided in 1986 to improve the infrastructure of senior secondary vocational education in order to reinforce its vocational aspect. Measures have therefore been taken to initiate a process of sector formation and innovation and achieve econ-

omies of scale. Employers' organisations, trade unions and industry are to be more directly involved in compiling curricula. Schools are to have more control over finances, staff and the organisation of teaching.

Schools are to have at least 600 pupils on their rolls and there will be four sectors: engineering and technology, agriculture, economics, and personal and social services and health care. Each school will provide both short and long courses. The Minister of Education and Science is to establish attainment targets, proposals for which will be made jointly by the education world and industry.

92 per cent of senior secondary vocational education establishments are now involved in sector formation and innovation activities and are holding consultations in one form or another on co-operation and amalgamation with other establishments.

Adult education

The Minister of Education and Science is responsible for co-ordinating adult education. There are three kinds of adult education: adult basic education, adult education and vocationally-oriented adult education. Adult basic education provides elementary skills and knowledge. Adult education is very much modelled on school education (i.e. general secondary and pre-university education and senior secondary commercial education). Vocationally-oriented adult education is geared to practising an occupation. In the case of basic education and adult education the government and the educational institutions, which are funded by the government, have a primary role in programming. In vocationally-oriented adult education programming is the joint responsibility of the government and industry. The planning of facilities in all fields is increasingly taking place at local and regional level.

Quality control policy and evaluation

Work is in progress on a system of periodic assessment as a means of quality control in secondary education. In 1987 and 1988 the first trial assessments were carried out for Dutch. No decision has yet been taken on whether to continue with the system.

International surveys of 13 and 14-year-olds put the Netherlands among the top countries for mathematics, physics and chemistry. In a group of 23 countries the Netherlands was just below average for biology.

Quality control is also possible through examinations. In most types of secondary education these comprise two parts: a national written examination and an internal examination set and marked by the school and comprising a series of tests. Work is in progress on a system to standardize marking from year to year.

Higher education

The structure of higher education has been changed significantly in the 1980s. The two-tier system has been introduced and higher vocational education has achieved considerable economies of scale.

The two-tier structure of university education

The structure of university education has been radically changed through the introduction of the two-tier system. The length of undergraduate courses, which provide a general university education, was thereby reduced to four years. A second tier was introduced to provide a limited number of students with the opportunity of specialising.

Students criticise the two-tier structure for the high pace of study and school-like approach it involves. Some employers maintain that the new-style graduates are not as good as those produced by the old system. The average length of studies has dropped considerably since the introduction of the new system, from 7.2 to 5.4 years. More students graduate too.

There are four types of second-tier or post-graduate studies: medical training, vocational training, research and design engineering training and teacher training.

Students undertaking post-graduate research are employed by the universities as trainee research assistants (AIOs). Government subsidies are available for networks set up by the universities to provide concentrated supervision for the doctoral work being done.

Post-graduate vocational courses are paid for by the students or their employers. Universities which wish to set up a vocational course may, however, receive a temporary start-up subsidy.

The course for design engineers in the engineering and technology sector puts the emphasis on the design of products, production processes and so on. Students taking the two-year course are treated as employees of the university, just as trainee research assistants are, and are paid by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The second-tier university teacher training courses are also fully funded by the Minister of Education and Science.

There are some four-year undergraduate courses which are not adequate preparation for a career. Further training is therefore provided in the second tier and funded by the Minister of Education and Science. The courses involved include those for doctors, veterinary surgeons, dentists and pharmacists.

The relationship between higher vocational education and university education

Higher vocational education and university education together constitute higher education in the Netherlands. Partly as a result of economies of scale, higher vocational education has begun to assume more equal standing in relation to university education. Further integration in the long term is not inconceivable.

There are two fundamental and permanent differences between the two systems: higher vocational establishments conduct no basic academic research funded by government and students with a senior general secondary education qualification may be admitted to higher vocational education but not to a university.

Economies of scale in higher vocational education

A merger process aimed at achieving economies of scale has recently been concluded in higher vocational education. The 350 establishments which used to exist have amalgamated to form 51 large, multi-sectoral institutions, 34 remained independent, most of them primary teacher training colleges (PABOs).

The mergers were considered to be necessary for increased autonomy and for curricular innovation and improvement. Institutions must now have at least 600 students on their roll. The operation was to achieve savings of Gld 97 million, 29 million of which was to be used for innovation.

Subject specialisation in higher vocational education and university education

In 1982 and 1986 two major subject specialisation and concentration operations took place in university education. The first, the Subject Specialisation and Concentration of Disciplines Operation, was designed to achieve cuts in expenditure of Gld 317 million while at the same time permitting a review of teaching and research responsibilities and how these were distributed among the universities. The universities conducted the operation themselves. The radical consequences were as follows: the closure of 53 courses, a reduction of the number of faculties of dentistry in the Randstad conurbation from three to one, the closure of two pharmacy faculties, the closure of four philosophy departments, cut-backs in social sciences and the closure of all andragogy courses and cut-backs in the humanities and in medicine. Of the total savings of Gld 317 million, 60 million were to be made available for innovation.

The second of the two operations, the Selective Contraction and Expansion Operation, began in 1986. The universities did not submit proposals themselves this time, which meant that the Minister of Education and Science had to take measures himself. The total amount to be saved was Gld 129 million, 70 million of which were to be channelled back into the universities for innovation. The measures taken by the Minister were intended to reduce the number of universities teaching a particular discipline and cut teaching capacity in line with falling student numbers and labour market requirements.

In higher vocational education subject specialisation operations are underway in three sectors: health care, education in the arts and teacher training.

Quality control

At the same time as increasing the autonomy of higher education institutions, the government also placed the emphasis more firmly on the quality of teaching and research. Procedures for quality control, for which the universities and higher vocational institutions are themselves primarily responsible, have been developed. The Inspectorate now plays a less conspicuous role, its main function being to stimulate and organise quality control and quality assessment.

In the universities quality is monitored per sector, in higher vocational education by institution.

Developments in management

Developments in views on management and in management

The system of management for primary and secondary education is rooted in the freedom of education which is laid down in the Constitution. Central government is responsible for the maintenance of the education system as a whole and for monitoring standards. Schools are responsible for actually providing education: what is taught, the materials used, the teaching methods and theoretical approach adopted, the appointment and dismissal of staff.

In recent decades politicians and society as a whole have increasingly felt that the government should exercise some influence on the content of education. Representatives of the edu-

cation world then wanted to be involved in shaping government policy, the result being an intensive consultative circuit for the discussion of education policy. Policy on terms and conditions of employment for teachers was determined in the same way. Over the years a pattern of policy and regulation thus developed which stipulated centrally exactly how the most diverse matters were to be dealt with. The umbrella organisations, the teachers' unions and the government all benefited from this because it gave them influence over and control of education at central level.

Only in the university sector, which comprises a limited number of large institutions, did the individual establishments have a role to play in the management process.

The extent and complexity of the regulations grew all the time and became an increasing burden for both government and schools.

At the beginning of the 1980s a new view of management began to develop: establishments were to have as much scope to determine their own policies as possible. Government regulations were to relate primarily to the results of education while educational establishments would decide for themselves how those results were to be achieved. This new view of management is now being put into practice within the education system. Each sector is using models and instruments appropriate to its needs.

Developments in management instruments

As establishments become more autonomous, the emphasis in decision-making will shift from national level to local and regional levels. A regional consultative committee has already been set up in adult education. These developments will reduce the influence of the umbrella organisations. At the same time, the influence of organisations not directly involved in education will increase. Employers, trade unions, industry and parents will play an increasing part in consultations on education. A new kind of organisation, which acts as an intermediary between establishments and the government, is also becoming more influential.

Planning in higher education may serve as an example of a government management instrument which is in line with the changed view of management. Once every two years the government publishes a Higher Education and Research Plan (HOOP), which is intended to be a documented diagnosis of current problems. The plan is then discussed by the government, the institutions and other sections of society as equal partners. The institutions draw up their own development plans and in the dialogue which follows agreement is reached on which body is to tackle which problem.

Funding

Funding systems regulate the way in which the government provides money for education. Existing systems are too detailed and do not afford any control over expenditure. The trend is to replace funding systems based on the reimbursement of declared expenditure with ones where the amount to be received is determined in advance on the basis of norms and where the establishment has some freedom as to how the money is spent. This trend is discernible in all sectors of education but has been carried furthest in higher education. Higher vocational education and university education are funded via block grants based on norms. Performance is one of the factors taken into account. From 1990 staff costs in senior secondary vocational education will be determined in advance on the basis of norms. Running costs will be funded via block grants. In the other kinds of secondary education, primary education and special education, the proposed changes to the funding systems are less radical. In the case of adult education, the national budget for basic education is divided up among a number of regions, which themselves decide how the funds are to be distributed among their institutions.

Economies of scale

Increasing the autonomy of individual educational establishments requires professional management. Economies of scale are also desirable. Such a process has been underway throughout the Dutch education system in recent years. The process may have been encouraged by falling pupil rolls which made mergers necessary. Some establishments may have chosen merger in order to expand the provision they can offer. Finally, the government itself has taken measures which have forced establishments to merge. In primary education, nursery and primary schools have been integrated. The number of schools almost halved in the process. Attempts by the government to close a number of small primary schools have failed because of social and political resistance. In senior secondary vocational education, the sector formation and innovation operation will result in a far smaller number of establishments, though student numbers in this sector have risen sharply. Plans for economies of scale in general secondary education and junior secondary vocational education failed to get through Parliament a few years ago.

In higher vocational education an amalgamation operation has reduced the 350 institutions to about 85. No mergers have taken place in university education. However, in higher education student numbers have increased to such an extent as to constitute an economy of scale in itself. Subject specialisation operations in higher education have, moreover, considerably reduced the number of courses.

Staff

Sufficient numbers of good teachers are required if good education is to be provided. The quality of teaching staff is primarily determined by the quality of the initial training they receive and by in-service training.

Recruitment and training of teachers

Teaching appears to have become less attractive as a profession in recent years. Negative reporting in the media, low salaries in comparison with other professions, few promotion opportunities and a lack of mobility all play a part. The recruitment and training of new teachers consequently gives cause for concern.

Primary teacher training colleges (PABOs) were established in their current form in 1984 when courses for primary and nursery teachers were integrated. During the merger process designed to achieve economies of scale in higher vocational education, an exception was made for primary teacher training colleges. The minimum roll to prevent closure was set at a lower level than for other institutions and as a result there are a lot of small independent colleges. There has been a serious fall in the number of students entering PABOs in recent years. After a period in which there were too many primary teachers, there is likely to be a shortage in the 1990s.

The range of subjects available at primary teacher training colleges is extremely broad. Graduating teachers are considered to be able to teach any subject to children of any age from four to twelve. This too has given rise to doubts about quality. Studies by the education inspectorate recently showed that students' knowledge of Dutch and arithmetic was a cause for concern. As a result admission requirements have been tightened up. The ageing of the teaching staff and the small size of some colleges do not encourage quality either.

The new-style secondary teacher training courses (NLO) were established in 1970. The courses originally qualified graduates to teach two subjects in the second grade sector. This is

now to be reduced to one in order to enable students to reach the required standard. Besides full-time courses there are also various part-time courses. There are too few teachers in certain subjects in secondary education and too many in others. Subjects with a shortage of teachers include mathematics, economics, the exact sciences and technical subjects. It is hoped that retraining, more places on training courses and measures to boost intake will remove the shortages. For example, schemes to refund tuition fees have been introduced to encourage students to follow teaching training courses in the shortage subjects.

University teaching training courses (ULOs) qualify graduates to teach in the first grade sector. The courses are one-year post-graduate vocational courses and are run in close co-operation with colleges providing NLO courses. The university courses face a lack of interest from graduates, particularly in mathematics and the exact sciences.

In-service training is of essential importance for the quality of education. In the present system the institutions which provide in-service training courses determine for themselves what they should offer and individual teachers decide whether or not to take part. Schools have no in-service training policies of their own. This is an undesirable situation and consideration is therefore being given to providing schools with a budget for in-service training so that they can have greater influence on the courses available and so bring them into line with what is needed. The total in-service training budget rose from Gld 30 million in 1980 to 76 million in 1985. It is estimated to increase further, to 125 million by 1995. Although some people consider this to be far too little, it is generally felt that it is primarily the lack of the right attitude to in-service training in schools which is the main problem.

Personnel policy

Terms of conditions of employment for teachers are governed by uniform, centrally-determined regulations. Schools have no scope for a personnel policy of their own. The complexity of the regulations does place an administrative burden on schools, however.

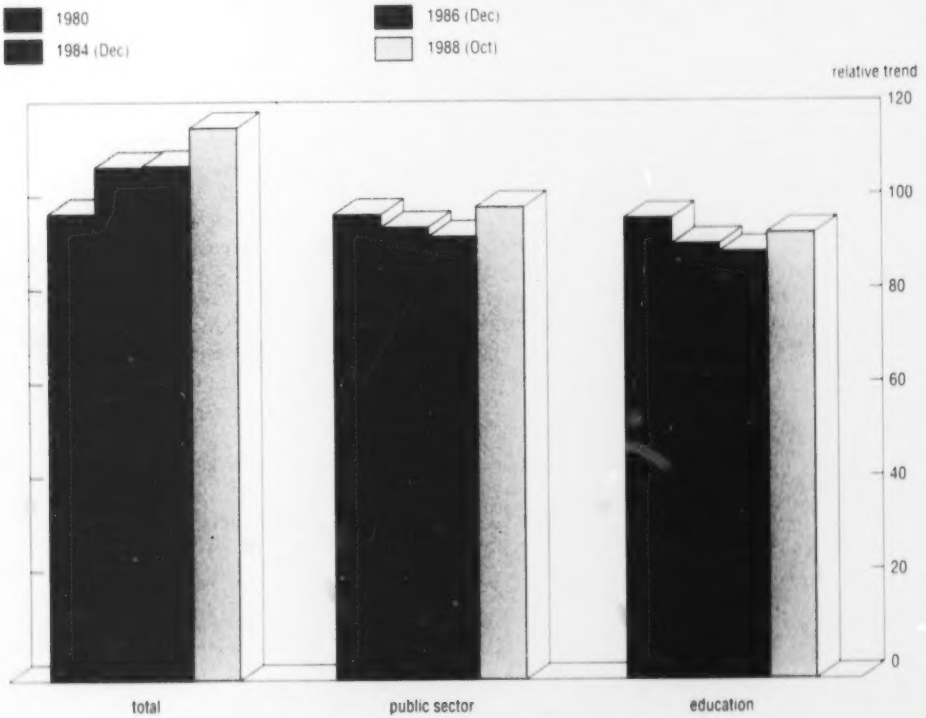
The staff establishment of a primary school is determined on the basis of the number of pupils. An average pupil counts as one pupil. On the basis of certain criteria — educational level and nationality of parents — a pupil may count for up to 1.9 points. Regulations affecting the legal status of teachers have resulted in a fragmentation of the staff establishment in primary schools. Innovation policy and measures to cater for a wider range of educational needs are not progressing either because of the restrictions placed on staff establishments. Since the merger of nursery and primary education, new-style primary schools are threatened with a lack of experience with teaching children aged between four and six.

Rules on legal status also result in rigidity and administrative problems in secondary education. The number of detailed, centrally-determined regulations is therefore being reduced and schools are being given more scope for their own policies.

In senior secondary vocational education block grant funding is being introduced for all expenditure, including staff costs. Proposals for the rest of secondary education are less radical. It is suggested that schools should have their own staff establishment budget on the basis of which they can determine for themselves how they wish the staff establishment to be made up.

In higher vocational education personnel policy has been decentralised to some extent, in line with the situation in the universities. Although higher education institutions are funded according to a block grant system, they repeatedly make the point that national regulations still mean that they have little scope for staff policies of their own.

Figure 16. **Wage trends (1980 = 100, annual average), 1980-1988**



Source: CBS, monthly socio-economic statistics.

Socio-economic aspects

In 1985 employment in education accounted for 5.8 per cent of the total volume of employment, a proportion which has remained stable for some years. In absolute terms employment has fallen somewhat in recent years. Employment in special education, senior secondary vocational education and higher education has risen. Teachers' salaries have fallen over the last ten years, in comparison with both total wage costs and the salaries of other public servants (Figure 16).

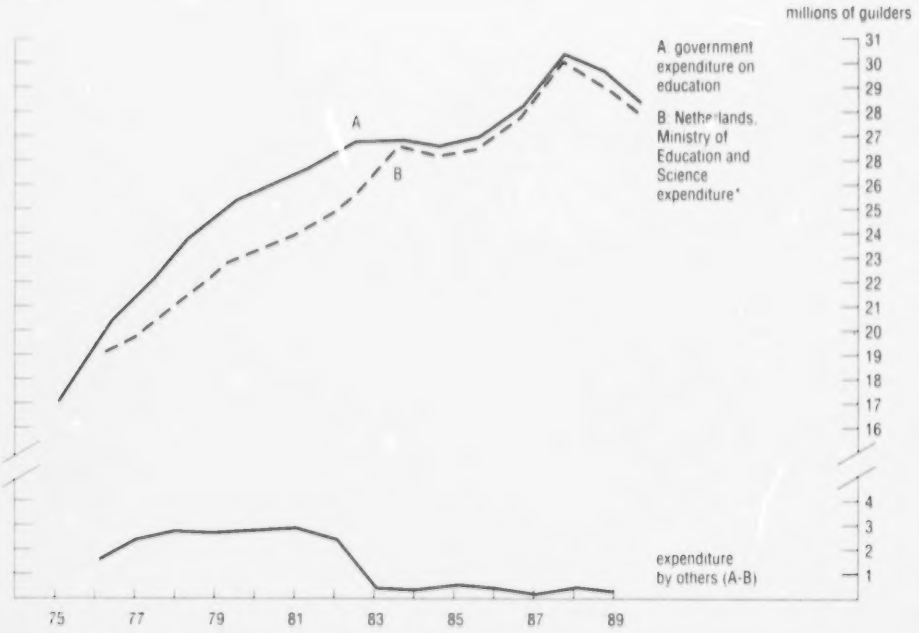
A comparison with other EC countries shows, however, that indexed maximum salaries in education in the Netherlands are among the highest in Europe. Starting salaries come somewhere in the middle. However, Dutch teachers are among those with the heaviest workload.

Financial matters

Expenditure on education

Between 1976 and 1987 government expenditure on education in the Netherlands increased continually (Figure 17). Figures for subsequent years are expected to show a drop. Almost all central government expenditure is in the hands of the Ministry of Education and Science. In 1987 this amounted to Gld 28 billion (Figure 18). The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries spends Gld 800 million on agricultural education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment devotes some Gld 560 million to training. The municipalities also spend some Gld 680 million. In the private sector, an estimated Gld 4 billion is spent by companies on training for their employees. Finally, an unknown amount is spent on correspondence courses and other forms of post-school adult education. Expenditure on education as a proportion of the national income has fallen from about 8 per cent to about 7 per cent. The Netherlands is among those OECD countries which devote the highest percentage of their gross national product to education. In terms of costs per pupil, special education is the most expensive form of education (Table 3).

Figure 17. **Government expenditure on education, 1975-1989**
(millions of guilders)



* excluding education funds administered until 1983 by the Municipalities Fund. 1988: probable outcome. 1989 budget.

Source: National Budget; central government accounts, Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science.

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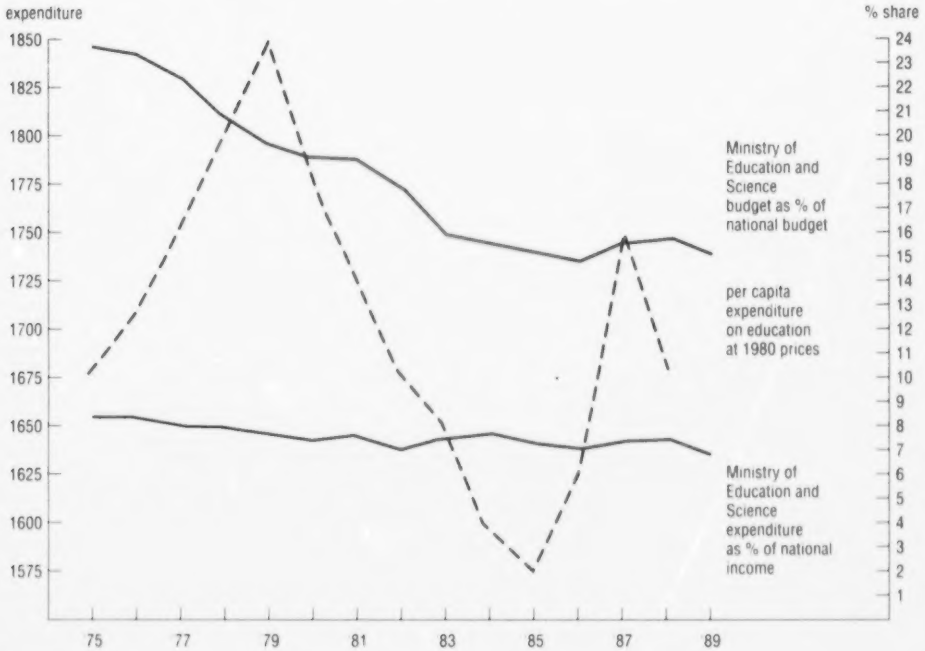
Figure 18. **Education and science budget as a percentage of total national budget and national income respectively, 1975-1989, and per capita expenditure on education at 1980 prices, CPB index, 1975-1989**



Source: CPB

Table 3. **Cost per pupil in full-time education on the basis of performance-based budgets, 1982-1988**

In guilders

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Primary education	3475	3385	3190	3304	3851	3899	3612
Special education	10729	11064	13376	12712	12723	13375	12641
General secondary education	5258	5230	5057	5131	5144	5438	5583
LBO	6031	6357	6453	6469	6698	6797	6493
MBO	5459	5597	5148	5328	5590	5396	5461
HBO	9258	9062	8899	8595	7977	7797	7867
University	..	..	10328	10250	9979	10349	10120

Note: Due caution is required in interpreting these figures because of the problems presented by definitions, restructuring, etc.
Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

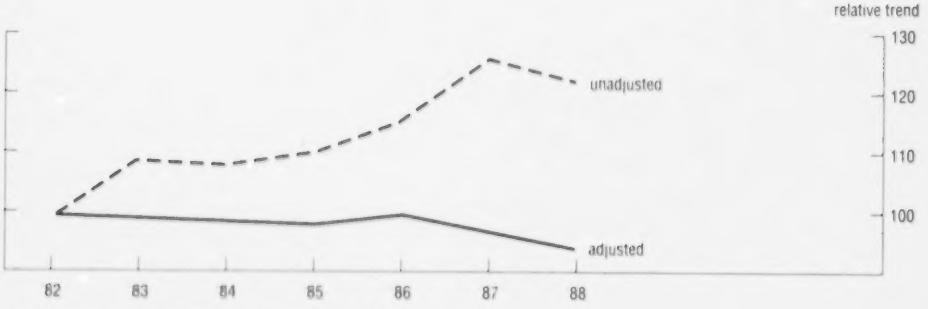
Ministry of Education and Science budget 1982-1988

From 1982 to 1989 government policy has been aimed at rationalising expenditure, in education as elsewhere. Education and research expenditure was cut partly by slowing down the rate of growth and partly by increasing charges. The most important economies involved raising the staff/student ratio and improving productivity through restructuring and economies of scale.

Investment in buildings in education has fallen considerably since 1986. In real terms, however, expenditure has continued to rise. Under various schemes relating to legal status and redundancy pay, the government has to continue to pay certain staff costs for years after cuts have been introduced. Expenditure is also affected by numerous other factors.

If expenditure resulting from such external factors is excluded from the calculations, the picture as given in Figure 19 emerges. The adjusted figures take account of transfers of funds from other budgets and the effects of measures relating to income policy introduced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, increases in prices and earnings and government policy on a wider front (promotion of the apprenticeship system, equipment for vocational education). The adjusted picture still reflects shifts in policy priorities (promotion of information technology). The effects of the unexpected growth in participation in education, for example, have also been incorporated.

Figure 19. **Indexed expenditure 1982-1988, Ministry of Education and Science (1982 = 100)**

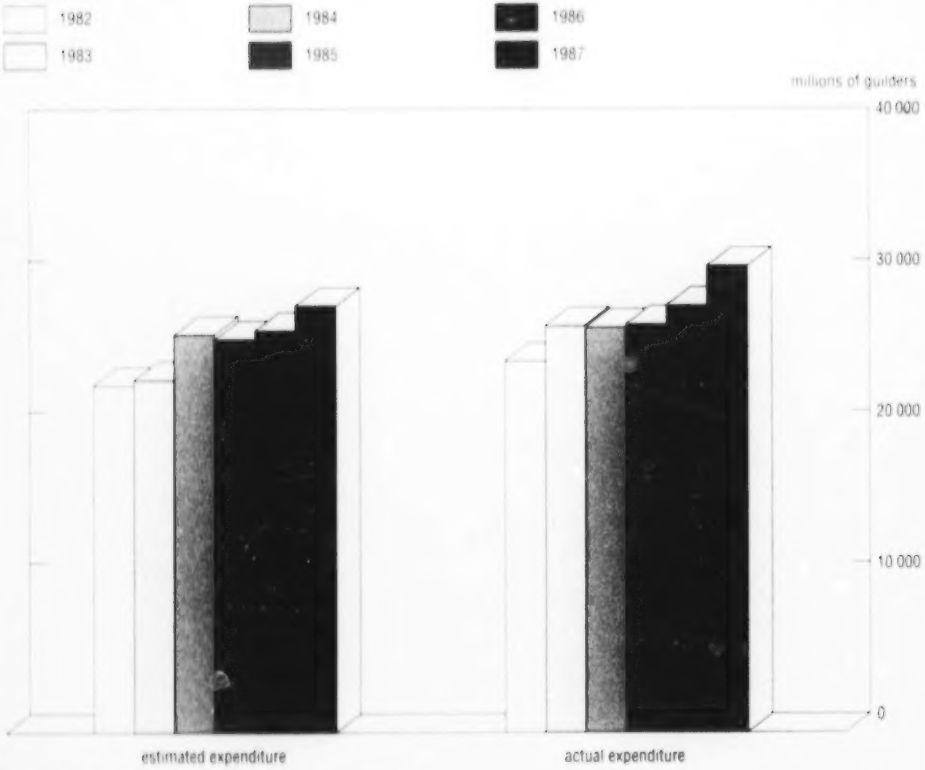


Source: Netherlands, Ministry of Education and Science.

The adjusted figures show that education expenditure is highly sensitive to even the smallest financial or social changes elsewhere in the national budget or in the economy as a whole. Small changes in one area can result in major amounts of expenditure in absolute terms. This has given rise to increasing criticism of the controllability of education expenditure.

In looking at the differences between estimated and actual expenditure (Figure 20) it is as well to remember that the estimates are two years behind the current situation. Attempts are being made to make funding rules less detailed and less specific in order to increase control over funding.

Figure 20. **Estimated and actual expenditure by Ministry of Education and Science, 1982-1987**



Source: Netherlands. Ministry of Education and Science.

Future developments

The cost of education will continue to rise as a result of increased participation in education among young people above school-leaving age. Greater emphasis on equal opportunities for girls and women and for people from ethnic minorities will intensify this trend, as will the growth in participation in education by people from ethnic minorities, as immigration continues to exceed emigration. Innovation in secondary education will also cost money. Moreover, there is a backlog of investments to be dealt with. Finally, the increasing knowledge-intensiveness of society will mean that demand for retraining and refresher courses will increase considerably.

All in all, education will thus require more resources than had been anticipated. The government has already considerably adjusted the muiti-year budget framework for education (spring 1989) by allocating an additional Gld 1.3 billion for 1994.

The efficiency with which the education budget is used will also enter into consideration. Productivity and success rates will continue to be important and wastage resulting from excessively long periods of study and unwise choices of subject or course must be avoided. Financial aid to students will also continue to be a focus of attention, particularly as it relates to other government spending on young people, such as benefits for the unemployed.

6. CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION

Ten problem areas and challenges facing education in the years ahead have been identified. These are described below.

Society's demands on education

Education is under pressure from the needs and desires of society. Participation in education is growing, while at the same time socio-economic and technological developments mean that adjustments must be made, as does the increasing knowledge-intensiveness of Dutch society and the economy. The participation of ethnic minorities and women is putting different demands on education. The pressure exerted on education gives rise to two questions. First, can education strike a balance between society's demands and its own independent socio-cultural functions? After all, schools are not simply a training ground for the labour market but also contribute to individuals' personal development and their ability to function in society. The second question is how the position of education in public and political opinion, which is fairly negative in the Netherlands, can be improved. The challenge facing education is to pool efforts and play an active role in the shaping of its own future.

Objectives and their achievement

Educational objectives are not always achieved. This may be due to problems of implementation (not knowing how to achieve the intended objective) but may also relate to the feasibility and legitimacy of the objectives themselves. For example, despite the formal and financial equality of different forms of education, there are still differences in quality between schools. The objective of equal opportunities is at odds with the variety and flexibility of education. Given the freedom of education which exists in the Netherlands, is it really possible to lay down general objectives for different types of education?

A sufficient supply of good teachers

The quality of education depends on the quality of teachers. The image of teachers and the teaching profession has been eroded to such an extent that too few young people want to follow teacher training courses. The challenge facing the education world and those responsible for education policy is to improve that image and further professionalise teaching.

Harmonizing supply and demand

The demand for well-trained staff is not being met. In general there is a demand for more well-qualified people. Also, some sectors are facing a shortage of manpower while in others there is a surplus. The necessity of persuading more people to follow higher education courses is becoming increasingly pressing as the number of young people declines. Measures are therefore needed to combat wastage (students leaving school early, delays in completing studies, unnecessarily lengthy paths of study). Co-ordination of policy on education and social security is desirable if all the available talent is to be used effectively. The social security system must encourage people to take up education and retraining. The government must, however, also cater for the category of disadvantaged individuals who are at risk of being left out because they are unable to improve their educational qualifications.

Innovation in education

Education needs to be flexible and innovative in order to keep up with social and technological developments. Highly centralised and detailed government regulation can be a hindrance. In higher education this has led to the concept of "hands off" government control.

Lifelong learning

The demand for courses for people with some work experience, for in-service training courses and for retraining is growing. Recurrent education, in which working and learning are combined, is increasing in importance. Most education of this kind is provided by and within private enterprises or by commercial educational establishments. The regular educational establishments supply only a small proportion of this type of education, possibly because they are too uninnovative and inflexible. This could in fact provide an important source of additional income for them.

Accessibility and access

The number of people from the lower social classes who participate in the higher levels of education remains low despite efforts to introduce policies to improve the situation. The same can be said with regard to ethnic minorities.

Catering for a wider range of educational needs

Although the aim of merging primary and nursery schools was to cater for a wider range of educational needs within the ordinary school system, the number of pupils referred to special education has increased. Have pupils really changed or is it simply the way in which teachers perceive their pupils that has changed? The question arises as to whether it is desirable to stigmatise large categories of pupils by catering for them separately in separate educational structures and establishments, rather than trying to adapt curricula and teaching methods in ordinary schools.

Financial controllability

It is difficult to control education spending. This is partly due to factors over which the Ministry of Education and Science has no influence, such as measures concerning the income policy of teachers, price and wage trends and the ageing of the population. It is also partly due to the financial relations between the government and schools. The detailed regulations provide no incentive for educational establishments to act in a cost-conscious manner. Increasing the financial responsibility of individual establishments may help solve this problem.

The management of education: who holds the reins?

Although the concept of a "hands off" approach to government control and autonomy for individual institutions in higher education has been accepted, there are in practice more than enough examples of government control being anything but "hands off". The instruments required to put this concept of control into effect have not yet been developed. In primary and secondary education centralised control and detailed regulation predominate. The debate on a new concept of government regulation is still taking place in these sectors.

It is increasingly being realised that centralised and highly regulated government control can be detrimental, for example to the flexibility and innovativeness of schools. Detailed political decision-making and the extensive consultative and advisory procedures which precede it sometimes result in decisions being taken on the basis of considerations which are diametrically opposed to rational deliberation from an educational point of view. If groups defending specific interests have too great an influence, this can damage education policy. Autonomous establishments and a government which espouses the principle of "hands off" control must develop an "adult" relationship if the challenges set out above are to be tackled.

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